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Imitation in faith: enacting Paul's ambiguous *pistis Christou* formulations on a Greco-Roman stage

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ABSTRACT

There is an ongoing debate in New Testament scholarship on the correct interpretation of Paul's *pistis Christou* formulations: are we justified by our own faith/trust in Christ, or by participating in Christ's faith and faithfulness towards God? This article contributes to the position of purposeful or sustained ambiguity by reading Paul's imitation – and faith(fulness) – language against the background of Hellenistic-Roman thought on and practice of imitation. In particular, the mimetic chain between teachers and students training for a philosophical disposition, and the philosophical *topos* of 'becoming like God' (*homoioōsis theōi*) offer material valuable for comparison. Since *pistis*, *fides* and cognates are used in these settings as both a quality to imitate and as attitude towards a model, and since, conversely, imitation is very much involved in Paul's *pistis*-vocabulary, it makes sense to read *pistis Christou* as shorthand for a mimetic movement of faith(fulness) via Christ towards God.

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1. Introduction

Within New Testament scholarship, a very particular debate has been carried on for decades now, related to the meaning of several variations of the expression *pistis Christou* in the letters of the apostle Paul¹. The discussion arises from the plurality of possible meanings, due to the ambiguity of the noun *pistis* on the one hand, and to the various possible relationships denoted by the genitive case on the other, resulting in the most common translations of 'faith in Christ', a so-called objective genitive, or 'faithfulness of Christ', a so-called subjective genitive construction. Grammatically, both options are valid and possible². Contextually, the Pauline epistles can back up both positions. Theologically, there is a lot at stake, for different interpretations offer different answers to questions like 'how can one be made righteous?', 'is righteousness an individual or collective affair?' and 'how human do we envision Christ to be?'³. Judging from some recent contributions, the dust is not quite settled down just yet⁴. The interpretation of Pauline theology as a whole, if such a construct exists, affects the interpretation of the formula, while the same is true for the opposite direction, thus trapping the interpreter in a hermeneutical circle⁵. So, to put it in hopeful terms, the question is how to escape this two-dimensional closed figure. I argue that in the ancient

Mediterranean moral praxis of imitation, and particularly in the philosophical *topos* of assimilation to God, we find an external model that may help us to visualize the logic behind Paul's *pistis Christou* formulations⁶.

Before I enter upon these themes of imitation and assimilation, it is helpful to have a look at the linguistic presuppositions involved in the *pistis Christou* debate. What most contributions have in common is the wish to 'disambiguate' the formula⁷. Recently, however, there seems to be a growing awareness that it may not be a matter of either-or. One early exception to the disambiguation trend is Richard Hays, who in the late nineties was responsible for putting the matter firmly on the scholarly agenda with his dissertation *The faith of Jesus Christ*. As regards the choice between faith or faithfulness, he 'challenges' James Dunn, a spokesperson for the 'faith in Christ' interpretation, 'to show that it was semantically possible in Hellenistic Greek to make such a conceptual distinction. The single word πίστις carries both connotations. Therefore, Dunn's distinction is anachronistic, a semantic fallacy'⁸. In response to him, however, Barry Matlock refers to lexical semantics and encourages us to start 'thinking in terms of the contextual selection of discrete senses of words'⁹. Hays indeed appears to fall prey to yet another fallacy, namely supposing that all meanings or uses of a word apply to any given instance, James Barr's famous 'illegitimate totality transfer'¹⁰. Indeed, Matlock's approach, to 'de-theologize' the debate by calling in the help of linguistics, is a fruitful one, and I fully acknowledge that language users generally understand ambiguous words by excluding the non-applying meanings based on markers in the direct context. What Matlock does not address, unfortunately, is the possibility that the ambiguity was in fact intended, or at least not intentionally excluded by Paul.

Apart from Hays, this possibility has been hinted at by scholars like Daniel Lynwood Smith and Robert Jewett, yet they do not further develop or substantiate it¹¹. An excellent case for 'sustained ambiguity' on the basis of the evidence of ancient semantics is made by Gerald Downing. After surveying a range of ancient authors on the issue of language ambiguity and using these insights as a lens to Paul's faith(fulness) language, he concludes:

[I]n Paul's world, trust in someone was itself founded in, and displayed and presupposed belief in their trustworthiness (as well as, most likely, their willingness to trust you): faith in Jesus would necessarily imply (unless explicitly denied) at the least a trust in his faithfulness. Ancient expectations of words have them carry much of their semantic baggage with them, whatever part of their range appears in context to be foregrounded; that is, unless some elements of their range have been specifically discarded.¹²

It is an important observation that trust (faith) in fact implies the trustworthiness (faithfulness) of the one in whom trust is placed. Taking a fresh approach to early Christian texts from the perspective of the 'shape of trust' in the Greco-Roman society, Teresa Morgan arrives at a similar understanding of *pistis Christou* as 'doubly reciprocal':

It is precisely the fact that Christ is both faithful to God and worthy of God's trust, trustworthy by human beings and trusted by them, that enables him to take those who *pisteuein* into righteousness (and human beings, in turn, to spread the word to others)¹³.

To take any one of these two or even four dimensions away, then, would imply a major injustice to the core message of the apostle¹⁴.

If it is indeed plausible that Paul exploits this ambiguity in his *pistis Christou* formulations, based on ancient semantic theory and actual language use of the *pistis* (and *fides*) word group in Paul's days, it is helpful to understand how this ambiguity plays out if we were to imagine its 'enactment'. One of the many merits of the renewed philosophical attention to Paul is the understanding of faith as a performative utterance, as elucidated by Giorgio Agamben: it 'immediately produces a real fact'¹⁵. Yet, what is the underlying reality or materiality, the associative background, or in terms of cognitive linguistics, the 'frame' of *pistis Christou*? Hays explicitly lists as an area that requires further elaboration '[t]he cultural/semantic background of Paul's πίστις language: how would Paul's uses of this terminology have been understood by his readers within the ancient Mediterranean world?'¹⁶ Downing does not offer a specific cultural embeddedness. Morgan suggests that a parallel can be found in the ancient practice of mediation, like that between the emperor Tiberius and revolting legions in Germany with the help of Germanicus, his nephew (Tacitus, *Annales* 1.31–52)¹⁷. While such mediation offers an interesting illustration of the multivalence of and reciprocity inherent to *fides* language, there is a more obvious choice when looking for a cultural 'habitat' of Paul's *pistis Christou* language, because of both its day-to-day occurrence in the social context of Paul's addressees and its frequent explicit and implicit use in the Pauline epistles. I am referring to the practice of moral imitation.

With sayings like 'imitate me as I imitate Christ' (1 Cor 11.1) or 'you became imitators of us and of the Lord' (1 Thes 1.6), Paul explicitly describes his project in terms of imitation. This motive is not completely alien to the whole *pistis Christou* debate either. In this discourse, it usually belongs to the terminology of those arguing for a 'faith(fulness) of Christ' interpretation: it is Christ's faith(fulness) in/to God that believers imitate¹⁸. Adversely, it is discarded by the opposite position for being too ethical, too horizontal, for expecting too little of God's saving act and too much of the human response¹⁹. However, in a recent article, following up on her earlier contributions, Morna Hooker explicitly combines a stance on *pistis Christou* being purposefully ambiguous with the model of imitation: 'The lexica's different definitions reflect what is in fact a hen-and-egg situation. Our trust/faith is founded in the trustworthiness/faithfulness of God, but those who trust in him become like him, trustworthy in their turn'²⁰. Like others, Hooker is uncomfortable with connotations of the word imitation, proposing to speak of 'participation', 'conformity' or 'sharing in what Christ is' instead²¹. While it is quite alright to wish to avoid unhelpful modern connotations, however, this should not make us blind to the ubiquitous presence of imitation in ancient societies. It is unfortunate that, even though the model of imitation as such is sometimes mentioned in relation to Paul's usage of *pistis Christou*, the model is, to my knowledge, solely used as an exegetical tool within the Pauline corpus, whilst leaving aside the extensive resource of contemporary pagan material. Adversely, there is an increasing amount of literature on the subject of Greco-Roman imitation and its application within the Pauline letters, yet here the topic of imitation in *pistis* is neglected²².

With this article, I aim to contribute by combining precisely these themes. In taking the pagan practice of moral imitation as a starting point, with special awareness to those cases in which *pistis* and cognates are involved, I will set a stage on which the role of Paul's *pistis Christou* language might be better understood, from

the perspective of his Greco-Roman audience²³. This metaphorical ‘stage’ consists of an analysis of the discourses involved: that of moral imitation in general, moral imitation in the context of practising philosophy, in particular, and moral imitation of the gods as an even more particular philosophical *topos*²⁴. I will thus draw from a large range of source material, mostly roughly contemporary to Paul, from the first century BCE to the second CE, but occasionally reaching back as far as Epicurus or Plato, when it is plausible that these sources were considered part of the later discourse. Differences between philosophical schools will sometimes be addressed to clarify the breadth of issues involved, yet as I consider the different positions part of one and the same popular philosophical discourse, I will not differentiate in advance between their relative influence on Paul²⁵.

In the next section, I will first survey a diversity of genres attesting to the function of *pistis* as means and end of moral imitation, i.e. *pistis* as an attitude enabling imitation and as a moral quality to imitate. Next, the specific setting of philosophical education demonstrates that *pistis* was seen as an important element in a philosophical disposition and as such functions in a mimetic chain of masters and students. Thereafter, a much more specific ancient philosophical *topos* is addressed that goes by the name of *homoiōsis theōi*, in which the gods are the object of imitation, participation or assimilation. From this setting, I return to Paul, arguing that in his message, *pistis* is enacted in precisely such a setting of imitation, with Christ, and different human models functioning as trusting and trustworthy intermediaries between the faithful God and the faithful believer.

2. *Pistis* as virtue and attitude in ancient character formation

From the statues in the theatres to tablets with copying exercises, and from honorary inscriptions at the forum to literary rivalry, the whole social sphere of the early Roman empire breathed the air of imitation²⁶. In the familial context, children were expected to mimic their parents’ and ancestors’ civic virtues²⁷. This form of imitation had its limits though, as Cicero indicates: vices are not to be imitated and not every child is capable to imitate every parental virtue like speaking eloquently or conducting wars, yet a virtue like faithfulness is among those which are in everyone’s reach (Cicero lists *iustitiam*, *fidem*, *liberalitatem*, *modestiam* and *temperantiam*)²⁸. Anyone who had the benefit of receiving some form of education would start by closely following the forms of characters written by their teachers and proceed to the rhythms of poetry, the rules of rhetoric and the literary patterns laid out by model poets, orators and philosophers²⁹. Yet, also in the educational context, imitation included the aspect of character formation, for by imitating literary examples students achieved likeness (*homoiotēs*) to both the style of the author and the moral characteristics of the exemplary subject matter³⁰. The teacher’s role, however, was the ultimate moral paradigm, a ‘living voice’ in front of the students³¹.

Within literary genres such as rhetoric, biography and historiography, virtues were demonstrated by using *exempla* from mythology or national history³². In these *exempla*, *pistis* (or *fides*) recurs as one of the qualities worthy of imitation. Quintilian is proud of Rome’s past filled with ideal examples:

But it is not only the content of such studies as these which we should know and constantly turn over in our minds; even more important are the records of the notable sayings and actions of the past. Nowhere is there a larger or more striking supply of these than in the history of our own country. Could there be any better teachers of courage, justice, loyalty (*fidem*), self-control, frugality, or contempt for pain and death than men like Fabricius, Curius, Regulus, Decius, Mucius, and countless others? Rome is as strong in examples as Greece is in precepts (*praeceptis valent*); and examples are more important³³.

Quintilian argues that oratory and philosophy, eloquence and virtue go hand in hand, and that both need precepts and even more examples³⁴. These examples are meant to ‘constantly turn over in our minds’, we are to, as the following sentence states, ‘drink deep draughts of justice from this source’ for without it, we cannot live ‘the good life’, or ‘run honour’s race’, nor can we hope of becoming a good orator. Offering moral examples from the lives of famous historical men seems to have been the primary motivation for authors like Plutarch and Valerius Maximus to write whole collections of biographies (the *Parallel Lives*) or, in the latter’s case, ‘memorable deeds and sayings (*facta et dicta memorabilia*)’³⁵. In one of Plutarch’s *Lives*, Aemilius Paulus III is said to have refrained from pursuing a career built upon private law cases or ingratiating the people. Instead, ‘he sought to acquire for himself what was better than both, namely, a reputation arising from valour, justice, and trustworthiness (τὴν ἅπ’ ἀνδρείας καὶ δικαιοσύνης καὶ πίστεως δόξαν), in which he at once surpassed his contemporaries’³⁶.

According to the historian Dionysius of Halicarnassus, under the rule of Numa, even the state could serve as a model in its ‘trustworthy and constant disposition (ἥθος πιστὸν καὶ βέβαιον)’, by erecting a temple dedicated to Pistis (Fides), influencing its citizenry to act likewise³⁷. This seems to be an amplification of the familiar motif of the ruler as ultimate example of virtue³⁸. Plutarch, for instance, advises the ‘uneducated ruler’ to ‘first gain command of himself, [...] regulate his own soul and establish his own character (καταστησάμενον τὸ ἥθος), then make his subjects fit his pattern (οὕτω συναρμόττειν τὸ ὑπήκοον)’³⁹. Elsewhere, when discussing the ultimate virtue of the ruler, Plutarch argues that justice (δικαιοσύνη) is envied most, because of its *pistis* and the *pistis* it manages to evoke among the masses:

For the fame and trustworthiness of no virtue, creates more envy than that of justice (οὐδεμιᾶς γὰρ ἀρετῆς δόξα καὶ πίστις ἐπιφθόνους ποιεῖ μᾶλλον ἢ τῆς δικαιοσύνης), because both power and trust (πίστις) follow it chiefly among the common folk. These do not merely honour the just, as they do the brave, nor admire them merely, as they do the wise, but they actually love the just, and put confidence and trust in them (φιλοῦσι τοὺς δικαίους καὶ θαρροῦσιν αὐτοῖς καὶ πιστεύουσιν)⁴⁰.

So, rather than simply imitating the *pistis* exemplified in the ideal statesman, here trust is the proper response or attitude towards the trustworthiness that is inherent to the virtue of justice. I shall argue below (Sections 5–7) that in Pauline literature, we find both uses of *pistis*, as dispositional quality to be imitated and as the proper attitude or action towards an exemplar.

That trust is not only a virtue to be imitated but also an attitude towards models is also confirmed in different sources. A cynic staged by Epictetus points at examples of vice to make clear that his public is looking for happiness in all the wrong places:

It is not in possessions. If you doubt that (εἰ δ' ἀπιστεῖτε), look at Croesus, look at the rich nowadays, the amount of lamentation with which their life is filled! (...) Whom are we going to trust about this question (τίσιν περὶ τούτου πιστεύσομεν)?⁴¹

Here, people are asked to relate to negative examples, in order to determine where to place their attitude of trust in order to lead a good life. The Delphic maxims also contain such general warnings about wrongly placed trust: 'do not trust wealth (πλουτῶ ἀπιστεῖ)', 'do not trust fortune (τυχῇ μὴ πιστεύε)'⁴². Epictetus presents us with a philosopher addressing a broad, 'popular' audience, a genre in which positive and negative mythical or historical examples were the ideal rhetorical tool⁴³. But more specifically, with the teachings of Epictetus, we have arrived at a somewhat distinct cultural context in which 'imitation in faith' is especially evident and relevant to our purposes: the context of philosophical education.

3. Imitating the master's *pistis*: the mimetic chain of philosophical education

Apart from the general examples of living faithfully or exercising faith in the civic sphere we have discussed so far, there is a particular context in which the aim of attaining a 'trustworthy attitude' or a 'faithful disposition' is especially frequent: the context or discourse of practising philosophy. Unlike the present-day academic discipline, in which 'thinking correctly' remains of paramount interest, the practice of philosophy in antiquity can perhaps be apprehended by the phrase 'practise what you preach' or 'walk your talk'. Aristotle already stated this principle in terms of *pistis*: 'in matters of emotion and of action, words are less convincing than deeds (λόγοι ἥττον εἰσι πιστοὶ τῶν ἔργων)'⁴⁴. According to the first century Stoic Musonius Rufus, 'virtue is knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) that is not merely theoretical, but also practical (πρακτικὴ) like the arts of medicine or music'⁴⁵. Hence, since philosophy is the greater art, 'practical training must follow invariably (τὴν ἄσκησιν ἐπακολουθεῖν πάντως)', even more than in the study of medicine⁴⁶.

This phenomenon of philosophy as a practice has recently been brought to the fore by Pierre Hadot (*Philosophy as a Way of Life*)⁴⁷ and is investigated and scrutinized further in John Sellars' thesis *The Art of Living: the Stoics on the Nature and Function of Philosophy*. Sellars describes the ancient understanding of philosophy as an art (*technē*), encompassing both rational principles (*logoi*) and practical exercise (*askēsis*) with the aim (*telos*) to produce corresponding actions (*erga*): 'With this conception, philosophical knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) will directly impact upon one's life (βίος) because such knowledge will necessarily lead to philosophical actions (ἔργα)'⁴⁸. Along these lines, Dihle emphasizes that, even though the early Socratic tradition knew a 'Beziehung zur philosophischen Lebensgestaltung', this focus came even more to the fore in post-classical times: 'Die platonisch-aristotelische Konzeption (...) verengte sich aber auf das Bemühen um die Einsichten, die unmittelbar auf den Lebensvollzug anzuwenden waren'⁴⁹. In his monograph on philosophers in the Roman Empire, Michael Trapp states that philosophy, as such, could ask sacrifices: 'Philosophy, taken as seriously as it showed itself to want to be taken, posed an evangelical challenge, to life-changing commitment of a kind that could make awkward demands on the individual; in

particular, it could demand the adoption of values and targets at odds with whose of ordinary civic society⁵⁰. It is interesting that especially within this philosophical community of alternative values, the process of character formation includes the attainment of a trustworthy disposition, as will be demonstrated below.

Within this practical philosophical context, the relationship between image and imitator was ever so present. In the final paragraph of one of his *Moral Epistles*, the Roman politician and Stoic philosopher Seneca quotes – as often – a precept by Epicurus and comments:

Choose a master whose life, conversation, and mind-expressing face (*vita et oratio et ipse animus ante se ferens vultus*) have satisfied you; picture him always to yourself as your protector or your pattern (*illum tibi semper ostende vel custodem vel exemplum*). For we must indeed have someone according to whom we may regulate our characters (*aliquo ad quem mores nostri se ipsi exigant*)⁵¹.

The master Seneca refers to, so it seems here, needs not necessarily be someone you meet regularly or even someone you know personally, although intimate knowledge of his life and mind should be very much present. Even more so, Seneca believes that the actual real-life transmission between master and student is fundamental, as we learn from a letter on ‘sharing knowledge’:

Of course, however, the living voice and the intimacy of a common life (*viva vox et convictus*) will help you more than the written word. You must go to the scene of action, first, because men put more faith in their eyes than in their ears (*quia homines amplius oculis quam auribus credunt*), and second, because the way is long if one follows precepts (*per praecepta*), but short and helpful, if one follows patterns (*per exempla*). Cleanthes could not have been the express image of Zeno (*Zenonem Cleanthes non expressisset*), if he had merely heard his lectures; he shared in his life, saw into his hidden purposes, and watched him to see whether he lived according to his own rules. Plato, Aristotle, and the whole throng of sages who were destined to go each his different way, derived more benefit from the character than from the words (*plus ex moribus quam ex verbis*) of Socrates. It was not the class-room of Epicurus, but living together under the same roof, that made great men of Metrodorus, Hermarchus, and Polyaeus⁵².

With this rich list of examples, Seneca confirms that transformation of character is the aim of philosophy. Just as Quintilian, to this aim, he favours examples above precepts⁵³. He furthermore shows that the philosophical quest does not merely involve imaginary relationships of imitation, but real-life *Nachfolgung* of school leaders⁵⁴. Moreover, these living embodiments of good character are better equipped to create the attitude of trust or belief (*credere*), for they can be seen rather than merely heard. By contrast, Epictetus points at the difficulty of the immense task of a teacher, ‘to make of you a perfect work, secure against restraint, compulsion, and hindrance, free, prosperous, happy, looking to God in everything both small and great; and you are here with the purpose of learning and practising all this’⁵⁵. Even though, according to his own Stoic doctrine, this ought to be an attainable aim, for it is not outside of our control, he wonders why his student does not succeed and deems this, as can be expected in a relationship of imitation, both the student’s and the teacher’s fault⁵⁶.

It is within this real-life philosophical education that the vocabulary of faith and trust finds a ‘natural habitat’, sometimes as attitude towards an exemplar, yet mostly as one of the qualities to imitate. In one of the allegedly pseudonymous letters ascribed to

Plato, Aristodorus is praised for showing ‘the most philosophic disposition of all who pursue philosophy (τὸ σοφώτατον ἦθος τῶν εἰς φιλοσοφίαν παρεχόμενον)’. This philosophical *ēthos* is explicated as consisting in ‘the steadfast and trustworthy and sound (τὸ γὰρ βέβαιον καὶ πιστὸν καὶ ὑγιές)’⁵⁷. Whether or not this short letter was actually written by Plato⁵⁸, the document is valuable for the relevance of its contents, for it is its readership in Hellenistic-imperial times that interests us here⁵⁹. The remarkable exclusion of intellectual capabilities or love of learning from the short definition of true philosophy constitutes one of the reasons why its authenticity is disputed⁶⁰. Yet, the abundant use of ethical adjectives (*bebaios*, *pistos*, *hugies*) is telling for precisely this reason: knowledge needs to be embedded in an ethical disposition (*ēthos*) that is certain, trustworthy and sound, in order to qualify as such.

This emphasis on firmness and trustworthiness of character is also evident in the otherwise divergent tradition of Epicureanism. Epicurus assures his student Pythocles that knowledge of natural phenomena ‘does not serve any other purpose than imperturbability (ἀταραξία) and a firm conviction (πίστις βέβαιος)’⁶¹. Thus, knowledge is envisaged as subservient to character transformation driven by *ataraxia* and a certain *pistis*. A remarkably similar position is taken up across school boundaries. Cicero deems it the task of philosophy to offer assistance in the journey towards a good and happy life⁶². He defines this assistance, echoing Epicurus, as the attainment of knowledge that should lead to confidence (*fidencia*), banishing fear and other disturbances from the mind⁶³. The Stoics even thought that the ultimate philosopher, the sage, does not ever lack this trust or confidence, for ‘mistrust means the assumption of a falsehood (τὴν γὰρ ἀπιστίαν εἶναι ψεύδους ὑπόληψιν)’. The opposite of this *apistia*, *pistis*, is defined here in very specific, epistemological vocabulary: ‘trust is civilised, since it is a strong apprehension, confirming what is assumed (τὴν δὲ πίστιν ἀστέιον ὑπάρχειν, εἶναι γὰρ ὑπόληψιν ἰσχυράν, βεβαιούσαν τὸ ὑπολαμβάνόμενον)’. Musonius Rufus also emphasizes that philosophy alone can teach how to attain a *pistis ischura*, a strong conviction about which things are evil and which things do not deserve our fear, because they are ethically indifferent according to the Stoic theory of value:

Now, since fearlessness and intrepidity and boldness are the product of courage, how else would a man acquire them than by having a firm conviction that death and hardships are not evils (ἢ εἴ τις περὶ θανάτου καὶ πόνου λάβοι πίστιν ἰσχυράν ὡς οὐ κακοῖν ὄντοιν αὐτοῖν)? For these are the things, death and hardships, I repeat, which unbalance and frighten men when they believe that they are evils (ὅταν ὡς περὶ κακῶν πεπεισμένοι ὦσιν αὐτῶν); that they are not evils philosophy is the only teacher⁶⁴.

Pistis here seems to be a quality that represents sound ethical judgment leading to sound action. This judgment can and must be practised in real life. Epictetus makes use of the example of a grammarian: if a grammarian is in a habit (ἐθίστη) of writing ungrammatically, his art (τέχνη) will perish. Thus, according to Epictetus, faithful actions (τα πιστά) strengthen the faithful man (ὁ πιστός), whereas faithless actions strengthens the faithless man (ὁ ἄπιστος) in his bad behaviour: ‘that is why the philosophers admonish us not to be satisfied with merely learning, but to add thereto practice (μελέτη) also, and then training (ἄσκησις)’⁶⁵.

Given the fact that this cultivation of the right disposition is so important, it is not surprising that the merits of a specific philosophical school can be measured by the lives

of its teachers, sages and founders⁶⁶. Their *ēthos* proofs their trustworthiness. While comparing the behavioural merits of Epicureans, Peripatetics and Stoics, Epictetus challenges his public: ‘show me a man fashioned according to the dogma’s which he utters’⁶⁷. Similarly, in an ironical portrait of an orator who thinks he is doing well because of the flattery of his disciples, he points out what an earnest searcher would be looking for: someone ‘who will teach him how he ought to live (πῶς δεῖ βιοῦν)’, who is ‘respectful (αἰδήμων), faithful (πιστός) and unperturbed (ἀτάραχος)’⁶⁸. Other schools are criticized for the lack of congruity between words and deeds. Especially the manner of one’s death was deemed informative. Cicero is all too happy to cite Epicurus’ last words: ‘to prove to you the discrepancy between his practice and his principles (*ut intellegas facta eius cum dictis discrepare*)’⁶⁹. Hence, the consistency of life and learning, culminating in a trustworthy disposition, is the quality par excellence upon which philosophers ought to be judged⁷⁰.

The process of imitating a master whom you know personally is continued when the student, in turn, becomes the exemplar. This is aptly phrased in the letter of comfort sent by the Neoplatonic philosopher Porphyry to his wife Marcella, a source that is of considerable later date than our main period of interest (1st century BCE–2nd CE), yet whose language indicates how *pistis* became more and more embedded in the conceptual field of philosophical imitation. Porphyry reminds her of the words spoken at her initiation into ‘true philosophy’ and counsels to act upon these words. For, so he writes, ‘it is a man’s actions that naturally afford demonstrations of his opinions, and whoever holds a belief (ὅστις ἐπίστευσεν) must live in accordance with it, in order that he may himself be a faithful witness (πιστός μάρτυς) to his disciples of his words’⁷¹. Having trust, or, put more cognitively, a belief, in something should change a master’s behaviour, which in turn shows trustworthiness towards students. Thus, a ‘chain of imitations’ emerges, with *pistis* functioning as both quality of the ‘links’ and relationship between different ‘links’. The trustworthiness or credibility of the model (its disposition) should generate trust or credence in the imitators (an attitude), who ought to become trustworthy (qua disposition) themselves. According to a variety of philosophical traditions, at the origin of such a chain, a place was reserved for the gods.

4. *Homoiōsis sophōi* and *homoiōsis theōi*: Platonists, Stoics and Epicureans on assimilation to the divine

Before we return to Paul and his *Pistis Christou* language, there is one even more specific philosophical *topos* that increases the relevance of this philosophical context we just discussed. For according to the majority of philosophical schools in the days of Paul, it was not only in the imitation of school leaders that this trustworthy disposition could be attained, ultimately, the goal of ethics was to become like, or assimilate to, the divine nature. This ideal of assimilating to the divine (ὁμοίωσις Θεῷ) is a motive that occurs throughout the Platonic oeuvre in contexts of physics, epistemology, and ethics⁷². In his emphasis on moral instead of martial divine qualities, Plato’s ideal of assimilation to God can be considered ‘a way to philosophically redescribe – or if you will, demythologize – the old heroic ideal of deifying virtue’⁷³. After Plato, it was embraced by a large scope of philosophical traditions including Stoics and Epicureans, with some different emphases, as the sources I will

discuss below confirm. Still, it was not until relatively recent that this pattern of ‘becoming like the gods’ gained a considerable amount of scholarly attention⁷⁴.

The early Stoics already internalized and ‘cognitivized’ the relationship with the gods by redefining the condition of being the gods’ enemy or friend as one of *asymphonia* or *dichonoia* and *symphonia* or *homonoia*, harmony or oneness of mind, respectively⁷⁵. According to Epictetus, Zeno had formulated the ‘chief doctrine of the philosophers’ in this manner: ‘To follow the gods is man’s end (τέλος ἐστὶ τὸ ἔπεσθαι θεοῖς), and the essence of good is the proper use of external impressions’⁷⁶. Epicurus writes that the gods ‘are always favourable to their own good qualities (ταῖς γὰρ ἰδίαις οἰκειούμενοι διὰ παντὸς ἀρεταῖς) and take pleasure in men like unto themselves (τοὺς ὁμοίους ἀποδέχονται), but reject as alien whatever is not of their kind’⁷⁷. Yet the expression that *homoiōsis theōi* is the *telos* of ethics seems to occur for the first time in the early imperialistic period, in a text by the Stoic Arius Didymus in which he appears to rely on the Platonist Eudorus⁷⁸. According to Didymus, Plato and Socrates followed Pythagoras in this teaching⁷⁹, but Plato added the disclaimer that we can only resemble God ‘so far as possible’⁸⁰. It is taken over as such by later authors like Alcinous and Diogenes Laertius, which suggests that was widely known in the imperial period.

In the literature on the *topos of homoiōsis theōi*, two claims on differences between schools stand out, which are helpful to eventually situate Paul’s conceptions in this playfield. The main apples of discord seem to be related to the amount of dissimilarity between divinity and humanity and, somewhat related, to the usefulness of following human examples. In the Platonist outlook, the process of assimilating to God may be understood in terms of a transcendent movement beyond earthly standards. In the *Laws*, *homoiōsis theōi* is explicitly set against the Protagorean adage that man is the measure of all things:

In our eyes God will be ‘the measure of all things’ in the highest degree (θεὸς ἡμῖν πάντων χρημάτων μέτρον ἂν εἴη μάλιστα) – a degree much higher than is any ‘man’ they talk of. He, then, that is to become dear to such an one must needs become, so far as he possibly can, of a like character (εἰς δύναμιν ὅτι μάλιστα καὶ αὐτὸν τοιοῦτον ἀναγκαῖον γίγνεσθαι)⁸¹.

The highest aim for humans, so this passage suggests, lies in becoming as far as possible like this divine measure. Here, some important philosophical successors and competitors of Plato seem to diverge. In the words of Julia Annas, ‘the alternative ancient tradition, that of Aristotle (in the main) and the Stoics and Epicureans, who see our final end as lying in the fulfilling of human nature, rather than in an attempt to become some other kind of thing’⁸². Similarly, René Brouwer states, ‘For Plato, the good life consists in becoming like god so far as is possible for a human being (...), for the Stoics the ideal is to become god in the sense of becoming part of the divine power that structures the world’⁸³.

The question is if this difference is not overstated, does Plato’s language of assimilation to God imply some mystical flight from this world, to become more-than-human?⁸⁴ Do Stoics and Epicureans leave no distance between the divine and the humane by completely ‘immanentizing’ the former in the latter? According to Plato, such assimilation is simply the consequence of enjoying fellowship (*homilein*) with God⁸⁵. The ‘measure of God’ is not set against any proto-Stoic account, but

against Plato's sophistic contemporaries, who were moral relativists, in Pauline words 'measuring themselves by themselves'⁸⁶. In fact, especially in the *Laws* but also in the *Republic*, the ideal of godlikeness is not reserved for guardians or philosophers, yet put to full, worldly use in educating all citizens⁸⁷. On the other side of the spectrum, the possibility of indeed 'fulfilling human nature' was only realized 'so far as is possible' as well. The bold Stoic notion of simply 'becoming God' was somewhat relativized by the scarcity of such divine men⁸⁸. Epictetus dears his public to show him 'a man who has set his heart upon changing from a man into a god', yet concludes 'Show him to me! But you cannot'⁸⁹. And Platonists could in the end be just as bold. Maximus of Tyre emphasizes the likeness between humanity and divinity. The soul of man is 'something very close to God and like him in its nature (ἐγγύτατον θεῷ καὶ ἐμφορέστατον)'⁹⁰. Furthermore, according to the second century rhetorician, it is untrue that they differ in trustworthiness, human intellect being *apistos*, while the divine is *pistos*: 'Divine prophetic powers and human intellect – this is a daring thing to say, but I will say it none the less – are kindred faculties; if anything at all resembles anything else, then there is nothing more similar to divine intellect than human excellence'⁹¹. Accordingly, Alcinoüs views *homoiōsis pros to theion* as a nothing other than the state of the human soul called wisdom (φρόνησις)⁹². Still, this 'Middle Platonist' does separate the worldly from the ultimate reality by distinguishing between the 'God above the heavens, who does not possess virtue', and the 'God in the heavens' who apparently does rendering him the proper object of assimilation⁹³. This perspective on *homoiōsis* is very much like that of the Jewish Platonist Philo of Alexandria, who also claims that 'nothing earth-born is more like God than man' yet limits assimilation to the Logos or second God⁹⁴. This Logos performs an intermediary's function: to 'separate the creature from the Creator' while being a surety to both sides⁹⁵:

to the parent, pledging (πρὸς πίστιν) the creature that it should never altogether rebel against the rein and choose disorder rather than order; to the child, warranting his hopes (πρὸς εὐελπιστίαν) that the merciful God will never forget His own work⁹⁶.

Platonic *homoiōsis* thus both upholds and bridges the distance to the transcendent God, and the reified usage of *pistis* here as 'guarantee' is the means by which the distance is bridged.

There is some mysticism involved, however, in Stoic accounts on *homoiōsis* as well, yet not so much in the form of a movement from earth to heaven, as in one from heaven to earth. The closeness of God and humanity is not merely an abstract conviction, it is of actual assistance in the process of cultivating the divine character. The words of Seneca sound reminiscent of metaphors and parables from the New Testament, when he explains the working of this process as something effected by God in us:

Do you marvel that man goes to the gods? God comes to men; nay, he comes nearer – he comes into men (*in homines venit*). No mind that has not God, is good (*nulla sine deo mens bona est*). Divine seeds are scattered throughout our mortal bodies (*semina in corporibus humanis divina dispersa sunt*); if a good cultivator (*bonus cultor*)⁹⁷ receives them, they spring up in the likeness of their source and of a parity with those from which they came (*similia origini prodeunt et paria iis, ex quibus orta sunt, surgunt*). If, however,

the cultivator be bad, like a barren or marshy soil, he kills the seeds, and causes tares to grow up instead of wheat⁹⁸.

Though the language of ‘becoming like God’ may sound suspicious to Lutheran theologians, we learn here that *homoïōsis theōi* is not necessarily conceived of as a construct based on human effort or merit. Seneca explicitly opposes the effort of cultic worship to an indwelling of God or his spirit and concludes that ‘no man can be good without the help of God’⁹⁹. At the same time, our being good is what pleases the gods: ‘whoever imitates them, is worshipping them sufficiently (*satis illos coluit, quisquis imitatus est*)’¹⁰⁰. So, the aim of equality to God does not preclude viewing God and man as separate entities either helping or worshipping the other in imitation. All in all, to come back to our initial question, the differences between Platonism and Stoicism are subtle, not well caught in sweeping statements of essentially different orientations.

The second issue responsible for some variation in positions among schools is the relationship between imitating God and imitating human examples of virtue. In his article ‘Epicurus as Deus Mortalis: Homoiosis Theoi and Epicurean Self-Cultivation’, Michael Erler explains how in this tradition ‘[h]omoiosis theoi becomes ὁμοίσις σοφῶ’¹⁰¹ and places this in a wider polemical context:

To present a perfected moral self as an example to be imitated was obviously to take a stance on an issue that was controversial between the schools. Plato and his pupils did not accept that *homoiosis* of a mortal σοφός can be as useful as *homoiosis theoi* for achieving moral excellence. As Plato says in the *Laws*: ‘Not man, but god is the measure of all things’. Later Platonists followed him in this¹⁰².

This thesis seems to be in need of some refinement. Erler refers to the anonymous *Commentary to the Theaetetus* and to Plotinus for this later Platonist debate and suggests that it ‘documents a discussion that went on in the first century BC’¹⁰³. Whether or not these references are enough to substantiate his claim, the *Laws*’ passage does not so much imply that imitation of humans per se is undesirable as voice anti-sophistic concerns¹⁰⁴. Moreover, both the *Laws* and the *Republic* show Plato’s vision for a whole society aimed at attaining divine virtue by means of virtuous leadership¹⁰⁵. Later Platonists were at the very least not univocal in their scepticism towards human examples. In a tract that prefigures the later ‘mirror for princes’ tradition, Plutarch presents the ruler as ‘image of God (εἰκὼν θεοῦ)’ who ‘by his virtue forms himself in the likeness of God (αὐτὸς αὐτὸν εἰς ὁμοιότητα θεῶ δι’ ἀρετῆς)’, he ‘must regulate his own soul and establish his own character (τὸ ἥθος), then make his subjects fit his pattern (οὕτω συναρμόττειν τὸ ὑπήκοον)’¹⁰⁶.

To understand the differences involved, it is useful to have a look at one particular Platonic treatise that is perhaps less well known in this context but harbours an abundance of *homoïōsis* vocabulary: the *Phaedrus*. This dialogue offers rich imagery to show that appropriation of this virtue is effected by following in a chain of mimetic love. In a parable on the immortality of the soul, Zeus is pictured as leading a giant procession of gods and spirits (246e–247a) in the shape of chariots towards the heavens to behold justice, temperance and knowledge as they are. In this, they are followed by other souls, who barely see these realities from below, since they struggle to restrain their horses, yet ‘that which best follows after God and is most like him’ (248a) might see some glimpses and when this soul ends up being born as a human, it is most likely

that of a philosopher or lover of beauty (248d). These more excellent human souls receive from the particular god they follow ‘character and habits, so far as it is possible for a man to have part in God (τὰ ἔθη καὶ τὰ ἐπιτηδεύματα, καθ’ ὅσον δυνατόν θεοῦ ἀνθρώπῳ μετασχεῖν) and, in their turn, choose a beloved soul to ‘make him, so far as possible, like their god’ (253a):

[B]y imitating the god themselves (μιμούμενοι αὐτοί) and by persuasion and education they lead the beloved to the conduct and nature of the god (τὰ παιδικὰ πείθοντες καὶ ῥυθμίζοντες εἰς τὸ ἐκείνου ἐπιτήδευμα καὶ ιδέαν ἄγουσιν), so far as each of them can do so (ὅση ἐκάστῳ δύναμις); so that they exhibit no jealousy or meanness toward the loved one, but endeavour by every means in their power to lead him to the likeness of the god (εἰς ὁμοιότητα αὐτοῖς τῷ θεῷ) whom they honour¹⁰⁷.

The usefulness of several layers of mediators, lower divinities and philosophers, between Zeus and the ‘beloved disciple’, is evident from this account. So, whether in the setting of a city-state or in the setting of philosophical education, the Platonic tradition offers ample material to allow for interhuman imitation, as a first step in approaching the excellence of the gods. Plato’s perspective here, however, shows that he envisions *homoiōsis* to be part of the immortal soul’s progress, whereas the Epicurean materialistic stance on the cosmos, including the gods, did not allow for such immaterial suppositions, rendering their idea of assimilation to the divine of the mortal human being highly optimistic or even hubristic in Platonic eyes. Furthermore, the love the souls in the *Phaedrus* feel for the god they follow immediately translates in the desire to actively teach others to become likewise. By contrast, as Erler himself argues, Epicurus’ care for others was only secondary in nature, by merely providing them with an example of human perfection¹⁰⁸. All in all, the main difference between the Epicurean and Platonic *homoiōsis* traditions, so it seems, does not lie in the endorsement of human intermediaries, but rather in the optimism about reaching the divine level from a mortal body and in the motivation of sages to help others reach their level of assimilation.

One matter has thus far been left unexplored: can we connect this tradition of *homoiōsis theōi* to the vocabulary of *pistis*, *fides* and cognates? We have discussed various examples of these word stems in connection to the practise of philosophical imitation in the previous paragraph; what about the discourse of likeness to God or the divine in general? In passing, we already saw Maximus of Tyre liken human trustworthiness to divine trustworthiness – or lack thereof – especially in the context of oracles. Yet, there are more poignant examples across the philosophical spectre¹⁰⁹.

Even though *pistis* is not a frequently praised virtue in Plato’s oeuvre, as an attitude or action it is used in the direct context of a *homoiōsis theōi* passage in book VI of the *Republic*. The subject of the discussion is whether the majority will be able to set aside their prejudice (διαβολή) as regards philosophers as guardians so that the state can indeed be modelled after the divine. A philosopher is described as someone who ‘allies himself with the divine and orderly becomes divine and orderly, as far as is possible for a human being’ and thereupon feels urged ‘to put into practice what he sees in the divine realm in the private and public lives of men, and to mold not just his own character (ἔθη καὶ ιδίαι καὶ δημοσίαι τιθέναι καὶ μὴ μόνον ἑαυτὸν πλάττειν)’ but become a ‘creator of righteousness, temperance, and any other kind of virtue (δημιουργὸν (...)

σωφροσύνης τε καὶ δικαιοσύνης καὶ συμπάσης τῆς δημοτικῆς ἀρετῆς)¹¹⁰. Then, the question posed is

But if the majority (οἱ πολλοί) see that we are telling the truth about him [i.e. the philosopher], will they get irritated with philosophers and refuse to believe us (ἀπιστήσουσιν ἡμῖν) when we say that a state would never otherwise be successful, unless artists portray it using some divine model (τῷ θεῷ παραδείγματι χρώμενοι)?¹¹¹

Faith in the philosophers, instead of prejudice, is a requirement in this reasoning for initiating the process of reforming a state according to the divine paradigm. *Pistis sophōi*, trust in the *homoiōsis theōi* of the wise, precedes a similar *homoiōsis* for the common people (*hoi polloi*). So, even though *pistis* does not function as a virtue to imitate, it is the proper attitude towards the philosophers, who act as intermediaries in assimilation to God.

In the Roman context, where Fides was worshipped as a prominent goddess¹¹², it was also possible to speak of a transference of the divine quality of faith into human minds. This is what we encounter in the crucial episode of Silius Italicus' epic *Punica*, at the point when Saguntum is sieged by the Carthaginians. Mercury pleads with Fides to intercede on behalf of the city and addresses Fides as 'Goddess more ancient than Jupiter, glory of gods and men, without whom neither sea nor land finds peace, sister of Justice, silent divinity in the heart (*in pectore*) of man'¹¹³. She allows herself to be convinced to end her self-chosen exile from earth in order to give a final boost of faith to the struggling inhabitants of Saguntum:

Taking possession of their minds and pervading their breasts, her familiar habitation (*invadit mentes et pectora nota pererrat*), she instilled her divine power into their hearts (*immittitque animis numen*). Then, piercing even to their marrow, she filled them with a burning passion for herself (*atque sui flagrantem inspirat amorem*)¹¹⁴.

What is especially noteworthy is the repeated connection between Fides and the human mind, breast and heart. Notwithstanding her long absence as a virtue and the flourishing impiety she laments (494–506), she represents an affinity between the divine and the humane. The effect of her dramatic descent is an instilment of the same virtue she represents, opening up the possibility of the citizens to enact faith again.

Even more explicitly, Epictetus names being *pistos* as the first divine quality that comes to mind as suitable for human imitation. When describing what is the *proprium* of philosophy, as opposed to something like carpentry, he argues one first ought to learn something (μαθὼν τινα), before putting it to work, and in the case of philosophy, this has to do with the existence and nature of the gods:

Now the philosophers say that the first thing we must learn (μαθεῖν) is this: That there is a God (ὅτι ἔστι θεός), and that He provides for the universe, and that it is impossible for a man to conceal from Him, not merely his actions, but even his purposes and his thoughts (διανοοῦμενον). Next we must learn what the gods are like (ποιοὶ τινες εἰσίν); for whatever their character is discovered to be, the man who is going to please and obey them must endeavour as best he can to resemble them (ἀνάγκη πεiráσθαι κατὰ δύναμιν ἑξομοιοῦσθαι ἐκεῖνοις). If the deity is faithful, he also must be faithful (εἰ πιστόν ἐστι τὸ θεῖον, καὶ τοῦτον εἶναι πιστόν); if free, he also must be free; if beneficent, he also must be beneficent; if high-minded, he also must be high-minded, and so forth; therefore, in everything he says

and does, he must act as an imitator of God (ὥς θεοῦ τοίνυν ζηλωτὴν τὰ ἐξῆς πάντα καὶ ποιεῖν καὶ λέγειν)¹¹⁵.

In this brief capitulation of the importance of imitation of the divine for the philosophical enterprise, Epictetus considers the cultivation of faithfulness essential to gaining the right disposition (*hexis*). As we saw above, being *pistos* is an important quality to Epictetus, a quality that is divine precisely because it is not dependent on external circumstances: practising *pistis*, one is able to die like a God, bear disease like a God (ἀποθνήσκοντα θείως, νοσοῦντα θείως)¹¹⁶. At the same time, though, he considers it a divine command:

Your faithfulness is your own (τὸ πιστὸν σόν), your self-respect is your own; who, then, can take these things from you? (...) Since you have such promptings and directions (ὑποθήκας καὶ ἐντολάς) from Zeus, what kind do you still want from me? Am I greater than he, or more trustworthy (ἀξιопιστότερος)? But if you keep these commands of his, do you need any others besides?

The flexibility in Epictetus' usage of *pistis* language is perfectly illustrated in this passage, as it is used first as a quality, and thereafter as an attitude towards either him or Zeus: whom would you rather trust, who is, literally, more worthy of your *pistis*? Evidently, the sage or teacher loses out to the god. According to Epictetus, however, the virtue of faithfulness does not consist in this attitude towards Zeus, but in putting Gods' directions into practice.

These examples show that when Christians in the early empire would speak of the importance of the virtue of faithfulness, or about the trust they put in their leaders, in Christ, in God, and of the trustworthiness of these 'objects of trust', worthy of their imitation, it was unproblematically understood by their pagan contemporaries. Still, for the prominence of the virtue of *pistis* as a quality of men and attitude towards God at the same time, we must turn to a Jewish-Hellenistic version of the Platonic and Stoic philosophical traditions. In Philo's works, *pistis* is most commonly used in a reified sense, denoting 'proof', 'pledge' or 'evidence'¹¹⁷. Additionally, it is also frequently used as a virtue in its own right, usually in connection with Septuagint passages that concern Abraham or Moses¹¹⁸. It represents the virtue of stability, certainty, trustworthiness and, as a virtue, it consists precisely in an action or attitude of trust, for it must be placed in the right, trustworthy object:

To purge away each of these, to distrust created being, which in itself is wholly unworthy of trust (ἀπιστῆσαι γενέσει τῇ πάντα ἐξ ἑαυτῆς ἀπίστῳ), to trust in God, and in Him alone, even as He alone is truly worthy of trust (μόνῳ δὲ πιστεῦσαι θεῷ καὶ πρὸς ἀλήθειαν μόνῳ πιστῷ) – this is a task for a great and celestial understanding (...) ¹¹⁹

While he adapts the Platonic epistemological division to allow for *pistis* to refer to the intelligible as well, he is perfectly in line with Platonism in juxtaposing the sensible and the eternal realm, with the Delphic maxims in distrusting worldly goods, and with Stoicism in regarding *pistis* an important quality of the sage who is not distracted by indifferent externals. The novelty in Philo's use of *pistis* lies in juxtaposing Abraham's attitude faith in the eternal God to faith in sensibles, thus identifying the action or attitude of trusting with the virtue of trust and trustworthiness. The virtue of *pistis*

consists in trusting in accordance with the trustworthiness of the object, and, so we will see, even in becoming trustworthy by association.

For even as in Philo, *homoiosis theōi* as a topic per se is never discussed in terms of *pistis*, he come close to suggesting that we ought to imitate God's *pistis*. Moses was a 'wise man (*sophos*)' because he had the privilege to 'stand' with God (Deut 5.31), understood as a means to 'put off doubt and hesitation, the qualities of the unstable mind (ἵνα ἐνδοιασμόν καὶ ἐπαμφοτερισμόν, ἀβεβαίου ψυχῆς διαθέσεις ἀποδυσάμενος), and put on that surest and most stable quality, faith (καὶ βεβαιωτάτην διάθεσιν, πίστιν, ἐνδύσεται)¹²⁰. So in God's presence, Moses is able to cloth himself with the divine stability, whose corollary, at least on the human side, is *pistis*¹²¹. As we will see below, this vocabulary of clothing will also be used by Paul to explicate imitation of the divine. Yet even more strikingly, Philo also calls *pistis* a quality that belongs to God, and that is precisely why the human variant is essentially different: it imitates divine *pistis*, yet will always remain an image of the divine archetype¹²²:

Such a person asserts that the faith which man possesses should be so strong as to differ not at all from the faith which belongs to the Existent (τὴν γὰρ πίστιν, ἣς ἔλαχεν ἄνθρωπος, οὕτω βέβαιον φησι δεῖν εἶναι, ὥς μηδὲν διαφέρειν τῆς περὶ τὸ ὄν), a faith sound and complete in every way. (...) Enough for man is the power to possess the images of these (εἰκόνας αὐτῶν), images in the scale of number and magnitude far below the archetypes (τῶν ἀρχετύπων ἐλαττωμένας)¹²³.

Philo thus grounds the relationship of human and divine *pistis* in the ontological or even cosmological relationship of copy to original, image to example. Such a relationship is not a static one according to Middle Platonist thought: the original grounds the existence of the image and shows what it can potentially become; it even acts as a *cause efficiens* leading the image in this direction¹²⁴. As a copy of divine *pistis*, Abraham's *pistis* is essentially weaker, but it strives towards becoming like the perfect original. So, to sum up, by presenting Abraham and Moses as the ultimate examples of both the cognitive quality of unwavering faith and the attitude of trust, placed in the ultimate trustworthy object, i.e. God, Philo makes the utmost use of the multivalence of *pistis* language. Moreover, even though Philo does not connect *homoiosis theōi* to *pistis* explicitly, by connecting Moses' stable faith to God's stability and by comparing human to divine *pistis*, we see the basic contours of the idea of assimilation to God in the quality of *pistis*.

5. Interhuman imitation in faith(fulness) in the Pauline communities

Before returning to the subject we started off with, Paul's ambiguous *pistis Christou* formulations, we ought to account for the relevance of our 'stage' of imitation in faith for understanding the Pauline letters. Whereas it needs no reaffirmation that Paul partakes in a discourse of imitation¹²⁵, and while the importance of *pistis*-vocabulary to the Pauline gospel may be evident, can we also find uses of *pistis* either as quality to be imitated or as attitude facilitating such imitation? In what follows, I will briefly refer to a number of passages to support my thesis that we indeed can, without aiming to offer a comprehensive exegesis.

An explicit admonition to imitate the faithfulness of another person or of Christ himself, a nice phrase like ‘imitate my *pistis* in Christ, as I imitate his *pistis* in God’ or something similar is lacking in the extant Pauline letters. In the early Christian tradition, it was not uncommon, however, to speak of imitation of another’s *pistis*. The *Letter to the Hebrews* echoes precisely this focus we saw in Greco-Roman sources on the importance of lived examples, including the lived faith of their leaders: ‘Remember (Μνημονεύετε) your leaders, those who spoke the word of God to you; consider the outcome of their way of life (ὧν ἀναθεωροῦντες τὴν ἑκβασιν τῆς ἀναστροφῆς), and imitate their faith (μιμεῖσθε τὴν πίστιν)’¹²⁶. But also in the Pauline letters, *pistis* plays a part in several interhuman relationships of imitation, as well as in the Christ-follower’s relationship to Christ, as will be made clear in the next section. As for the imitation of human examples, it is noteworthy that here *pistis*-vocabulary pertains to imitation of faith or faithfulness as a dispositional quality, and not to a faith as the attitude enabling a relationship of imitation. Like Philo, Paul obviously employs Abraham as a prototype, as the father of all the faithful: circumcized and uncircumcized ‘follow in the footsteps’ of this narrative and historical *exemplum* of *pistis* that is specified as ‘with and without foreskin’ (Rom 4.11–12). The presentation of Abraham as father fits the general Roman pattern of mimicking the civic virtue of the great ancestors.

Yet apart from this more abstract usage of imitation, it is also possible to speak of a mimetic chain in the Pauline network of communities in analogy to the master–student relationships we discussed in Hellenistic philosophy. Given the many admonitions and thanksgivings referring to it, the strength or firmness of the *pistis* of his addressees is of continuous concern to Paul. It is the one thing he appears to be most interested about, when informing after the well-being of the communities he founded and visited (Phil 1.27; 1 Thes 3.5). They are continuously reminded to stand firm or praised for standing firm in or by their *pistis* (1 Cor 16.13; 2 Cor 1.24; Rom 11.20) which seems to stand in a paradigmatic relation to standing in the Lord (1 Thes 3.8; cf. Col 2.5). The vocabulary involved suggests that *pistis* is something in respect of which a community can not only stand but also be strengthened or encouraged (1 Thes 3.2: τὸ στηρίξαι ὑμᾶς καὶ παρακαλέσαι ὑπὲρ τῆς πίστεως ὑμῶν) and even something capable of increasing or growing (Phil 1.25: προκοπὴν (...) τῆς πίστεως¹²⁷; 2 Cor 10.15: αὐξανομένης τῆς πίστεως ὑμῶν) or, even more specific, of being perfected when lacking (1 Thes 3.10: καταρτίσαι τὰ ὑστερήματα τῆς πίστεως ὑμῶν). The reverse is also possible, since firmness of faith(fullness) is threatened by testing (*peirázō*, 1 Thes 3.5) or tribulation (*thlipsis*, 1 Thes 3.3) and may be weakened by distrust (*apistia*, Rom 4.20; Rom 11.20). All this shows that *pistis* comes in degrees, and that Paul and his companions, like Timothy, are given the position of a teacher or even ‘father/brother’ sponsoring this faith(fullness). To fulfil this position adequately, however, a teacher must of course be trustworthy (*pistos*) himself, so that he is worthy of imitation¹²⁸:

Indeed, in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. I appeal to you, then, be imitators of me (μιμηταί μου γίνεσθε). For this reason I sent you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord (τέκνον ἀγαπητὸν καὶ πιστὸν ἐν κυρίῳ), to remind you of my ways in Christ Jesus (ὅς ὑμᾶς ἀναμνήσει τὰς ὁδοὺς μου τὰς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ), as I teach them everywhere in every church (καθὼς πανταχοῦ ἐν πάσῃ ἐκκλησίᾳ διδάσκω)¹²⁹.

If we analyse this according to our ‘mimetic chain-model’, no less than four ‘shackles’ can be distinguished: Christ, Paul, Timothy and the addressed community. In calling his teachings literally ‘ways’ that can be refreshed by another’s presence, both the practical nature of these teachings and the transferral by means of stepwise imitation are made apparent.

In the beginning of *1 Thessalonians*, it becomes clear that imitation not only functions in top-down structures headed by Paul, but that the collective faith(fulness) of his addressees is an example to other Christ-communities. In the thanksgiving section, Paul starts by praising the Thessalonians’ ‘work of faith(fulness)’, fully acknowledging the exercise it involves, similar to acquiring a philosophical disposition, to continue with describing various mimetic relationships:

And you became imitators of us and of the Lord (ὁμοιωταὶ ἡμῶν ἐγενήθητε καὶ τοῦ κυρίου), for in spite of persecution you received the word with joy inspired by the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia (ὥστε γενέσθαι ὑμᾶς τύπον πᾶσιν τοῖς πιστεύουσιν ἐν τῇ Μακεδονίᾳ καὶ ἐν τῇ Ἀχαΐᾳ). For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place where your faith in God has become known (ἐν παντὶ τόπῳ ἡ πίστις ὑμῶν ἢ πρὸς τὸν θεὸν ἐξελήλυθεν), so that we have no need to speak about it¹³⁰.

Here, Paul speaks of Christ, himself and the addressees as being successive models for imitation. In this mimetic chain, the Thessalonians in their turn became an example (*tupos*) to ‘the believers’¹³¹: a participle that might simply be a common, unmarked designation, yet, considering the early date of this letter, could also be argued to carry the ‘thicker’ meaning of ‘those who have placed their trust in God, in Christ and/or in his followers’. Anyhow, as the final quoted sentence confirms, it is their trust in God that is exemplary so that it speaks louder than words.

6. Imitation of Christ by and in faith(fulness) in the Pauline letters

When Paul speaks of his and his addressees’ faith in relation to Christ, most of the times, this faith is not the content or *imitandum* but the means by which the imitation takes place¹³². First of all, Paul repeatedly expresses the content of faith in terms of imitation of Christ’s death and resurrection. ‘But if we have died with Christ, we believe that (πιστεύομεν ὅτι) we will also live with him’¹³³. ‘For since we believe that (πιστεύομεν ὅτι) Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have died’¹³⁴. These short credo’s imply not merely a cognitive assent to ‘articles of faith’, as the form ‘believe that’ may suggest, but a conviction or trust that radically alters their mode of life, as it is now linked to Christ’s. Whereas assent can be merely on the lips, faith in Christ’s resurrection has to take hold in the heart so that a person can be made righteous¹³⁵. The imitation is expressed even more strongly in terms of assimilation in the expression ‘in him we might become the righteousness of God (ἡμεῖς γενώμεθα δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ)’¹³⁶. Paul’s aim is to ‘give birth to his children’ as people in whom Christ is formed¹³⁷. However, if the model after which they are formed is not vindicated or has not achieved perfection by being resurrected, this *pistis* is ‘in vain (κενὴ)’ or ‘pointless (ματαιά)’; for then they cannot count on being resurrected and perfected themselves¹³⁸. This is reminiscent of

the concern of the philosophical searcher, hoping to find a teacher whose life and death express his or her convictions, even though the idea of imitation in resurrection would cause some eyebrows to be raised. *Pistis* seems to be more of an attitude than a quality in the instances discussed so far, for it is either explicitly directed to Christ and his resurrection as its object, or implicitly linked to his perfection, so that without this link it is useless. Adversely, Epictetus would never consider one's faithful disposition as useless, for it is not dependent for its value on any external including its model. Nevertheless, it is very much in convergence with Platonist ontology, according to which Form and particular exist in a mimetic relationship, the image being dependent for its very being on the original in which it participates¹³⁹.

An even stronger connection between *pistis* and this Christ-formed life can be found in utterances that are responsible for labelling Paul a mystic¹⁴⁰. Paul repeatedly speaks of living 'in Christ', 'in the Lord' or 'in him' and, conversely, though less often, of Christ living in him¹⁴¹. In these phrases, *pistis* is used in paradigmatic relation to Christ, both with the same preposition (ἐν) as near equivalents. In 2 *Corinthians*, we read the exhortation, 'Examine yourselves to see whether you are living in the faith (εἰ ἐστὲ ἐν τῇ πίστει). Test yourselves. Do you not realize that Jesus Christ is in you (ὅτι Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς ἐν ὑμῖν)? – unless, indeed, you fail to pass the test!¹⁴² Similarly, from the letter to the Galatians, 'it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in/of the Son of God (ἐν πίστει ζῶ τῇ τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ) (...)' . This last instance of *pistis* is one of the *pistis Christou* formulations, to which I shall return in the next paragraph, yet for now it suffices to point out that 'living in *pistis*' is used to explicate the phenomenon of Christ living in his followers. Of course, Hellenistic-Jewish notions of the divine wisdom indwelling in human beings highlight a relevant context for this vocabulary, yet the parallel with Seneca's 'intervening' God is perhaps even more adequate, since it shares the same reciprocity inherent to these Pauline expressions¹⁴³. Seneca's God comes not only near, but also inside people in the form of divine seeds that, if cultivated, spring up in the likeness of their source. Accordingly, in Paul, the believer being in Christ is simultaneously Christ dwelling in the believer, which effects this 'belief' to be more than an outward-facing, trusting attitude. *Pistis*, in these instances, seems to also stand for Christ's faithful disposition that is appropriated in the lives of his followers: it springs up in Christ's likeness. Accordingly, acting according to faith is acting like God or Christ, as for instance in the admonition to 'welcome him who is weak according to faith (Rom 14.1: τὸν δὲ ἀσθενοῦντα τῇ πίστει προσλαμβάνεσθε), with the rationale that 'God has welcomed him' (14.3), a theme upon which later on the variation is made to 'welcome one another, just as Christ has welcomed you' (Rom 15.7: προσλαμβάνεσθε ἀλλήλους, καθὼς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς προσελάβετο ὑμᾶς). 'In faith' or 'according to faith' is here shorthand for the attitude towards Christ that simultaneously appropriates his faithful behaviour.

There is an interesting text from the pastoral epistles that support the possibility of *pistis* as referring to Christ's faithfulness, which draws an analogy between Christ and the human imitator. Introduced by the technical introduction, 'this teaching is trustworthy (πιστὸς ὁ λόγος)', the conditions are put forward that if the human 'we' is like Christ in his death and enduring, so also in his life and reigning. But it becomes interesting if this 'we' deviates from the pattern of imitation: in case of a denial, this is again mirrored by a denial of Christ, yet if 'we' are being unfaithful (εἰ

ἀπιστοῦμεν), the pattern is interrupted: ‘he remains faithful (ἐκεῖνος πιστὸς μένει) – for he cannot deny himself’¹⁴⁴. This demonstrates that for one, also in the days in which the pastorals were written, the language of imitation was still prevalent. What is more, the consequences of each one’s role in this imitation were being thought through: as a model, Christ could interact with his imitators, but not to the point of abnegating his own virtue. Finally, we learn that according to the author, who probably reflects on a wider known teaching, Christ is *pistos*, so much so that it is an undeniable, inseparable part of his disposition¹⁴⁵. And this faithfulness of Christ is thought of in a context where a relationship of imitation is the topic under consideration.

So, we have seen that in the position of the Christ-follower, *pistis* can refer to both the attitude of faith, trust, belief, conviction directed at Christ and the quality of faithfulness, trustworthiness, loyalty modelled after Christ. Now, the question left in the minds of those at home in the *pistis Christou* debate is did Paul also think of Christ as having an attitude of faith in God? Based solely on the starting point of ‘sustained ambiguity’, there is no reason to separate his being filled with faith from his faithfulness. Yet, there even is some textual evidence that suggests that Christ was indeed thought of as having beliefs and that his followers imitate these beliefs as well. In an insightful article modestly titled ‘2 Corinthians and the Πίστις Χριστοῦ Debate’ (purposefully different from all the ‘neglected evidence’ variants), Kenneth Schenck draws attention to Paul’s citation from the Psalms¹⁴⁶:

But just as we have the same spirit of faith (τὸ αὐτὸ πνεῦμα τῆς πίστεως) that is in accordance with scripture – ‘I believed, and so I spoke (Ἐπίστευσα, διὸ ἐλάλησα)’ – we also believe (πιστεύομεν), and so we speak, because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus (...) ¹⁴⁷

Schenck argues that if we try to capture the logic behind Paul’s reasoning, it makes most sense that Paul understood this quote to be voiced by Christ, and not in the first place, as is often assumed, by the Psalmist, rendering Paul’s own belief an imitation of Christ’s belief that God would resurrect him¹⁴⁸. While Schenck hence repeatedly speaks of ‘Jesus’ faith as exemplary for human faith’, he never explores the wider context of the imitation motive in Paul, let alone his cultural surroundings¹⁴⁹. Yet, as is hopefully sufficiently clear by now, from the background of practising philosophy, imitation of a master in character, mind, faith and even speech was considered indispensable.

7. Mediated imitation of God as cultural model for Paul’s *Pistis Christou* formulations

In the finale of this article, it seems fitting for God to enter the scene, even as my argument would win in strength if this entrance would be more organic than *ex machina*. How does the divine fit into this evolving scene of student–master–sage imitation? We have already seen that God is the object of human faith (1 Thes 1.8: *pistis pros ton theon*). Is God also viewed as a moral paradigm, particularly so in *pistis*, in the Pauline literature?

In contrast to our philosophical references, God is not directly mentioned as the object of imitation, even though God is regularly praised for being *pistos*¹⁵⁰. On a

closer look, though, in all four of these cases, the issue at stake is the stability or perfection of the faithful. At the beginning of *1 Corinthians*, this process of perfection is spoken of in terms of being strengthened by Christ up to the end (1.8) so as to be irreproachable on the day of the Lord. In this context, it is said that God is faithful (1.9: πιστός ὁ θεός). Further on in the letter, they are warned to remain standing if they are subjected to a test, for ‘God is faithful (πιστός δὲ ὁ θεός), and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength’ (10.13). At the end of *1 Thessalonians*, a similar reassurance is given. Paul wishes his addressees to be sanctified entirely by God so that their body, mind and spirit are irreproachable (5.23) at the *parousia*, which is affirmed by the words ‘[t]he one who calls you is faithful (πιστός ὁ καλῶν ὑμᾶς), and he will do so’ (5.24). The same model can also be said to apply to the fourth specimen of the adjective *pistos*, in which Paul appeals to God’s faithfulness, this time to reaffirm his own reliability. In order to explain to the Corinthians why he had not come to Corinth, he first rebuts the complaint of inconsistency:

As surely as God is faithful (πιστός δὲ ὁ θεός ὅτι), our word to you has not been ‘yes and no’. For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, whom we proclaimed among you, Silvanus and Timothy and I, was not ‘yes and no’, but in him it is always ‘yes’. For in him every one of God’s promises is a ‘yes’. For this reason it is through him that we say the ‘amen’, to the glory of God. But it is God who establishes us with you in Christ (ὁ δὲ βεβαιῶν ἡμᾶς σὺν ὑμῖν εἰς Χριστὸν) (...) ¹⁵¹

Duplicity or two-mindedness does not belong either to God, or to those who serve him. Paul’s call upon God’s faithfulness to establish (*bebaioō*) his own is wholly understandable seen that his own sincerity is in question. Paul involves Jesus Christ as the fulfilment of God’s promises, i.e. God’s ‘yes’ to us, and as the one in whom ‘we’ respond affirmatively to these promises. Christ is the firm, unwavering representative of God’s faithfulness and the representative and guarantee of our ‘amen’ to God. In all four cases, then, the stability of God, expressed by the adjective *pistos*, functions not so much as the model, but rather as guarantee for the stability, trustworthiness and ultimate perfection of the Christ-community. Imitation of God per se or of God’s *pistis* is not part of Paul’s vocabulary.

In implicit and explicit contexts of imitation, we indeed encounter Christ as a mediating intermediary, comparable to the *sophos* in Stoicism, the *deus mortalis* in Epicureanism and the ‘god in the heavens’ in Middle Platonism. As we argued above, all school traditions recognized the need for some kind of human example, if only, as in Platonism, to recall the soul’s own prenatal glimpse of the virtues themselves. Paul too acknowledges this need when he affirmatively quotes from the book of *Isa* that humanity has no access to the ‘mind of the Lord’, yet, he continues, ‘we have the mind of Christ’ ¹⁵². Mirroring the descent of God or even of Fides to earth and into human minds in our Greco-Roman sources, Christ is the image of God that came to the earth, so that humans may share in his divine mind. In his comprehensive study into language of ‘image of God’ and ‘being made like God’, George van Kooten concludes that ‘[a]s Christ is the image of God, and man, by becoming of the same form as Christ participates in this image, the *homoiōsis Christōi* is the intermediary stage in the process of assimilation to God’ ¹⁵³. To allow for this assimilation, the pre-existent Christ needed

to take on the 'likeness of man' first¹⁵⁴. This seems to be a move that is unparalleled in the pagan discourse of *homoiōsis*, especially in its drastic form of slavery and suffering, although the Platonic variant is closer as regards the other-regarding motivation or even love of the teacher.

It is from this role of Christ as intermediary in imitation, as image of God's faithfulness to humanity and model for human faith in and faithfulness to God at the same time, that the sustained ambiguity of the *pistis Christou* phrases is brought to the fore. It will be the purpose of these final paragraphs to briefly discuss how, in at least three of the four passages in which the seven *pistis Christou* phrases are used, the discourse of imitation is present. To be sure, I do not mean to imply that this is a sufficient context for these passages or even for these phrases, since evidently, the discourse of law, sin and justice plays an important part as well. My aim is, however, to offer a reading of these passages which connects them to the Mediterranean culture, more specifically the philosophical practise and intellectual *topos* of imitation of each other, teachers, sages, gods and, ultimately, God.

First, in the *Letter to the Philippians*, Paul refers to his own righteousness as 'one that comes through *pistis* in/of Christ (τὴν διὰ πίστεως Χριστοῦ), the righteousness from God based on *pistis* (τὴν ἐκ θεοῦ δικαιοσύνην ἐπὶ τῇ πίστει)'. He continues by expressing his wish to 'know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death (συμμορφιζόμενος τῷ θανάτῳ αὐτοῦ), if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead.' We already saw that Paul often expresses belief in this mimetic pattern of sharing in Christ's life and death and that he expects this attitude of faith to alter his life and become Christ-like, as a performative, mimetic act. Attitude, that is faith in Christ, and quality, that is a 'Christ-like' faithful disposition, thus come together in the act of imitation¹⁵⁵.

Then, there is the passage we already encountered from the *Letter to the Galatians* (2.15–21). The imitation is here evident in the identification of Paul with Christ's crucifixion, being literally 'co-crucified (συνεσταύρωμαι)', and with his subsequent life: 'and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by *pistis* in/of the Son of God (ἐν πίστει ζῶ τῇ τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ), who loved me and gave himself for me'¹⁵⁶. The ambiguity of *pistis* here can hardly be missed: if Christ lives in 'me', then 'my' *pistis* is his *pistis* too. Paul's disposition has been taken up in Christ's own, characterized by *pistis* and self-giving love. At the same time, it is Christ's trust in God and Paul's trust in Christ – 'we have come to trust in Christ Jesus (εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν ἐπιστεῦσαμεν)' – that paves the way for this process of imitation.

A little further in the same letter, we read that 'what was promised through *pistis* in/of Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe'¹⁵⁷. Not unlike Italicus' dramatic return of Fides to the oppressed people on a 'defiled earth (*pollutas (...) terras*)', *Pistis* also needs to return to 'all that is under the power of sin (τὰ πάντα ὑπὸ ἁμαρτίαν)', in order for this transference of faith(fulness) to be effective, and 'she' returns simultaneously with Christ's coming (3.22–25)¹⁵⁸. The consequences for the believers are further explicated as 'in Christ you are all children of God through faith (πάντες γὰρ υἱοὶ θεοῦ ἐστε διὰ τῆς πίστεως ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ)' and you have 'clothed yourselves with Christ (Χριστὸν ἐνεδύσασθε)'. Both metaphors are perfectly at home in a mimetic setting: as

children, you ideally mirror your parents, not your disciplinarian's, virtue. But even more so, by putting on another's cloths, you impersonate his character. This connection between putting on new clothes and *homoiosis theōi* is confirmed by the deuteropauline tradition: in *Ephesians* we read how the new life consists being taught in Jesus (4.21: ἐν αὐτῷ ἐδιδάχθητε), and to 'clothe yourselves with the new self, created according to the likeness of God (ἐνδύσασθαι τὸν καινὸν ἄνθρωπον τὸν κατὰ θεὸν κτισθέντα) in true righteousness and holiness (ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ καὶ ὁσιότητι τῆς ἀληθείας)¹⁵⁹. The reference to the virtues of 'true' righteousness and holiness may very well be a play on Plato's famous *homoiosis* passage in the *Theaetetus*¹⁶⁰. At any rate, this understanding within the 'Pauline school' demonstrates that *pistis Christou*, imitating Christ by means of and in his *pistis*, was seen as an intermediary step in becoming like God, even as to Paul, talk of being 'modelled after God' would probably be a bridge to far.

To sum up, we have seen that the idea of moral imitation pervaded the familial, educational and public spheres of the Roman Empire in the days of Paul, that imitation between students and masters was considered of paramount importance in philosophical schools and, most importantly, that in both contexts *pistis* is used either referring to a dispositional quality to model one's character upon or as an attitude towards a model. Within these philosophical circles, we saw that 'becoming like God' was a widely used ethical aim, to which all traditions in one way or another invoked the help of lesser divine or higher human intermediaries. One could even imitate the divine in being *pistos* or having *fides*. In the letters of Paul, I distinguished between interhuman imitation, human imitation of Christ and imitation of God. Whereas in interhuman relations, faith is not so much used as an attitude towards an example, in reference to Christ, *pistis*-language seems to form the basis for a relationship of imitation and identification, including his faith in resurrection and faithfulness towards God. Finally, we have argued that God's own trustworthiness has everything to do with the human movement towards trustworthiness and perfection, yet that imitation of God takes place through the intermediate model of Christ, who actively played the human part, so that we are able to enact his. In the immediate context of the *pistis Christou* formulations, we find ample clues to support our claim that the Greco-Roman practice of imitation sets the stage to understand the ambiguity in these phrases. According to Paul's mimetic logic, Christ's faith and faithfulness has become our faith and faithfulness through our faith in him.

I will conclude with one more witness to Paul's legacy of mediated imitation of God. Roughly two hundred years after Paul, Clement of Alexandria brings together the platonic ideal of *homoiosis theōi* and Paul's mimetic chain by calling assimilation to God the 'aim of faith':

And openly and expressly the apostle, in the first Epistle to the Corinthians, says, 'Be ye followers of me, as also I am of Christ,' in order that that may take place. If ye are of me, and I am of Christ, then ye are imitators of Christ, and Christ of God. Assimilation to God, then, so that as far as possible a man becomes righteous and holy with wisdom, he lays down as the aim of faith, and the end to be that restitution of the promise which is effected by faith¹⁶¹.

With this synthesis, Clement made Paul's participation in the discourse of *homoioōsis theōi* and its relation to Paul's *pistis*-vocabulary explicit.

Notes

1. The seven occurrences have slight variations: διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (Gal 2.16), ἐκ πίστεως Χριστοῦ (Gal 2.16), ἐν πίστει (...) τῇ τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ (Gal 2.20), ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (Gal 3.22), διὰ πίστεως Χριστοῦ (Phil 3.9), διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (Rom 3.22), ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ (Rom 3.26).
2. In an exchange of views published in the SBL Symposium Series, both Hays (supporting the subjective-genitive reading) and Dunn (supporting the objective-genitive reading) hold that the phrase itself is inconclusive, though each also holds that the outcome of the grammatical arguments favours his own interpretation. Cf. Hays, "Πίστις and Pauline Christology," 39 and James D.G. DUNN, "Once More, ΠΙΣΤΙΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ," 67.
3. For an overview of these and other theological concerns, see Hays, "Πίστις and Pauline Christology," 55–57.
4. A comprehensive overview of the current situation, including 'both sides of the story' is offered by Bird and Sprinkle, *The Faith of Jesus Christ*. Ulrichs, *Christusglaube* is a recent, profoundly written monograph, ultimately defending the 'faith in Christ' position, while incorporating New Perspective insights.
5. Cf. the conclusion of an overview of arguments in Easter, "The Pistis Christou Debate," 42: 'interpreters resort either intentionally or unintentionally to their larger models for reading Paul that are already in place.'
6. Granted, this Mediterranean model will form nothing but an even wider circle with the Pauline material, yet I presume that at least here, the amount and variety of the sources will leave less room for ideological presuppositions.
7. As formulated literally by Matlock, "The Rhetoric of πίστις," 177, yet implied by many others.
8. Hays, "Πίστις and Pauline Christology," 58. Cf. Hays, *The faith of Jesus Christ*, 174–175: 'We should be willing to recognize that Paul's language may sometimes be ambiguous by design, allowing him to speak in one breath of Christ's faith and our faith.'
9. Matlock, "Detheologizing the Pistis Christou Debate," 16. Cf. Matlock, "Paul and Pistis Christou," 315. In support of his approach, Matlock build on linguistic theory as explained by D.A. Cruse in *Lexical Semantics*.
10. See Barr, *Semantics of Biblical Language*, 218.
11. Smith, *World of the New Testament*, 174: 'understanding a concept does not always require us to choose one meaning at the expense of another meaning. Sometimes, to understand *pistis* in a given context, you need to take into account both senses of the word: faith and faithfulness.' Jewett, *Romans*, 277–278: 'neither of the strict construals matches what the original audience would have understood. I wonder whether the ambiguity may have been intentional on Paul's part'.
12. Downing, "Ambiguity, Ancient Semantics and Faith," 160. Cf. Ibid., 155–156: 'What is ruled out, then, it is here argued, is any hard precision, any clear lines between possible connotations of particular words, the kinds of 'nice' distinctions desired in some theological or ideological discourse. In interpreting sympathetically our ancient texts it will, rather and almost inevitably, be a matter of discerning family resemblances among uses of particular lexemes.'
13. Morgan, *Roman Faith and Christian Faith*, 273, 274.
14. That Paul exploits the ambiguity of terms has also been noted in regard of different words and passages, see e.g. with regard to κατοτρίζω and καταργέω Stockhausen, *Moses' Veil*, 127: 'The wisest course is simply to admit that when Paul uses an ambiguous term or form, he means to play upon that very ambiguity. We must allow him to do so.'

15. Agamben, *The Time that Remains*, 131: 'we have to venture something like a performative efficacy of the word of faith realized in its very pronouncement.'
16. Hays, "Πίστις and Pauline Christology," 38.
17. Morgan, *Roman Faith and Christian Faith*, 292–294. Morgan does not elaborate so much on the theme of imitation in *pistis*. See p. 257, n. 162, which also includes a few references to the New Testament: 'Though imitation (of God, Christ, or those entrusted with authority) is not often connected explicitly with *pistis* language here or elsewhere in the New Testament, imitation can be seen as one way in which human beings learn how to respond to the *pistis* that God and Christ extend to them.'
18. For example, Williams, "Against Pistis Christou," 446: 'Christian faith is Christ-faith, that relationship to God which Christ exemplified, that life-stance which he actualized and which, because he lived and died, now characterizes the personal existence of everyone who lives in him. Christ is not the "object" of such faith, however, but rather its supreme exemplar—indeed, its creator.'
19. See for these reservations and their rebuttal, Hooker, "ΠΙΣΤΙΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ," 323. This also seems to be the rationale behind Hays' critique of Williams: 'he downplays the vicarious elements of Paul's story of salvation. I would prefer to speak less of Jesus as "exemplar" and somewhat more of Jesus as the σπέρμα ("seed") whose apocalyptic destiny of death and resurrection reshapes the destiny of those who are now "in" him.' See Hays, "Πίστις and Pauline Christology," 52.
20. Hooker, "Another Look at πίστις Χριστοῦ," 53. Cf. Hooker, "ΠΙΣΤΙΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ" and Hooker, *From Adam to Christ*, chapter 14, 'Pistis Christou', 165–186.
21. Hooker, "ΠΙΣΤΙΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ," 323: 'participation is a much better word than imitation'; Hooker, *From Adam to Christ*, 92: 'Of course this is not imitation, it is conformity'; Ibid., 183: 'it is thus a question of sharing in what Christ is, not a question of imitation.'
22. De Boer, *The Imitation of Paul*; Reinhartz, "Pauline exhortation"; Getty, "The Imitation of Paul"; Castelli, *Imitating Paul*; Brant, "The Place of Mimēsis"; Clarke, "Be Imitators of Me"; Dodd, *Paul's Paradigmatic 'I'*; Copan, *Saint Paul as Spiritual Director*; Eastman, "Imitating Christ Imitating Us"; Van Kooten, *Paul's Anthropology in Context*, 199–219 (Section 2.4: 'Paul, the image of God and likeness to Christ'); Ellington, "Imitating Paul's Relationship to the Gospel"; Williams, "Imitate Me"; Smit, *Paradigms of Being in Christ*; Harrison, "The Imitation of the 'Great Man' in Antiquity".
23. In this article, the references to theatre, stage, (en)acting, audience and such are merely rich metaphors to conveniently describe the idea of a real-life associative context. A case can and has been made, however, for viewing Paul's imitation (or *mimēsis*) language (esp. in *Phillipians*) against precisely this backdrop of the Greco-Roman love for theatrics and dramatics: see Eastman, "Imitating Christ Imitating Us," 427–450.
24. A discourse is usually thought of as a normative, integrated set of ideas to which individual texts relate in a variety of ways, shaping the meaning of the discourse by reframing the elements according to their purposes. In my application of the term, I am not so much interested in the deconstruction of discourses of power (this is how discourse analysis is often understood following the work of M. Foucault) as in the manner in which an individual authors like Paul creatively reconfigure known sets of ideas, thus shedding light on their own distinctive message.
25. From a methodological perspective, the phenomenon of 'popular philosophy' forms an alternative to demonstrating one-to-one relationships between Paul and specific philosophical traditions. See Malherbe, *Paul and the Popular Philosophers* and Thom, "Popular Philosophy," 279–295.
26. See e.g. on intertextuality and imitation MacDonald, *Mimesis and Intertextuality*, on education and imitation Morgan, *Literate Education*, esp. 251–254, and Criboire, *Gymnastics of the mind*, 132–136; Witherington, *Philippians*, 76–78; on rhetoric and imitation Fiore, *Personal Example*, 26–44.

27. Most famous, perhaps, is the advice of Scipio's father at the end of Cicero's *De Re Publica* (6.16) to 'like your grandfather here, like me, practise justice and piety which are indeed strictly due to parents and kinsmen, but most of all to the fatherland (*ut avus hic tuus, ut ego, qui te genui, iustitiam cole et pietatem, quae cum magna in parentibus et propinquis, tum in patria maxima est*)'. See on moral education and the imitation of ancestors Marrou, *A History of Education*, 234–236. Some excellent examples of the imitation of ancestral glory have been collected by Harrison, "The Imitation of the 'Great Man,'" 223–228. Translations of ancient Greek and Latin sources have, with small revisions when necessary, taken over from the Loeb Classical Library editions, unless stated otherwise.
28. Cicero, *De Officiis* 1.33 (121). On the considerable overlap of meaning between *pistis* and *fides*, see Freyburger, *Fides: Étude Sémantique Et Religieuse*, 33; Gruen, "Greek Πίστις and Roman Fides," 68.
29. In fact, according to Seneca, their fingers were first 'held and guided by others so that they may follow the outlines of the letters; next, they are ordered to imitate a copy and base thereon a style of penmanship.' See *Epistulae* 94.51.
30. Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *De Imitatio* fragment 6.1.
31. Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* 2.2.8.
32. For Plutarch's and Seneca's usage of *exempla*, see Brenk, "Setting a Good Exemplum," 195–215.
33. Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* 12.2.29–30.
34. Cf.: 'if indeed he is to attain perfection by the merits both of his life and of his eloquence' (Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* 12.2.27); 'No one can be a perfect orator who does not both understand the language of honour and have the courage to use it (*qui honeste dicere et sciet et audebit*)' (Ibid., 12.2.31).
35. Plutarch's *Vitae* are not all meant as one-on-one examples to imitate, though. As pointed out by Christopher Pelling, sometimes, '[t]he moralism (...) is of a different sort, rather closer to that of tragedy: this is a more descriptive moralism, pointing a truth of human experience rather than building a model for crude imitation or avoidance.' (Pelling, "Aspects of Plutarch's Characterisation," 274). See, on the multi-valence in the *Lives* and the critical position Plutarch expects of his readers, Duff, "Plutarch's 'Lives' and the Critical Reader," 59–82. On the moral purpose of Valerius Maximus, see Skidmore, *Practical Ethics for Roman Gentlemen*.
36. Plutarch, *Aemilius Paulus III*, 2.6.
37. Dionysius van Halicarnassus, *Antiquitates Romanae* 2.75.3.
38. For example, Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* 8.1.21: 'he believed that he could in no way more effectively inspire a desire for the beautiful and the good than by endeavouring, as their sovereign, to set before his subjects a perfect model of virtue in his own person.'; Pseudo-Aristotle, *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum* 1420B7: 'It will be necessary for you to know that for most people either the law or your life and speech are models (παράδειγματά).'
39. Plutarch, *Ad principem ineruditum* 780d.
40. Plutarch, *Cato Minor* 44.7–8.
41. Epictetus, *Diatribae* 3.22.27–28.
42. *Apud* Stobaeus, *Anthologium* 3.1.173 (128 and 142, respectively).
43. See Bultmann, *Der Stil der paulinischen Predigt*, 50–51.
44. Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea* 10.1.3 (1172A34–35). Cf. *Ethica Nicomachea* 10.1.4 (1172B3–6): 'Hence it appears that true theories are the most valuable for conduct as well as for science; harmonizing with deeds, they carry conviction (συνωδοὶ γὰρ ὄντες τοῖς ἔργοις πιστεύονται), and so encourage those who understand them to guide their lives by them (ζῆν κατ' αὐτούς).'
45. Musonius Rufus, *Fragment* 6, p. 22, r. 7–8 in Hense's edition. Translations from Lutz 1947.
46. Musonius Rufus, *Fragment* 6, p. 23, r. 15–16 in Hense's edition.

47. Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, esp. chapter 11.
48. Sellars, *The Art of Living*, 107.
49. Dihle, "Die Griechische Philosophie," 17. Cf. Ibid., 18: 'Das rechte Leben ist Inhalt und Ziel philosophischer Lehre und sonst gar nichts, meinen kaiserzeitliche Autoren wie die Stoiker Musonios und Epiktet.' On the role of Socrates in shaping this practical approach to philosophy cf. Cooper, "Socrates and Philosophy".
50. Trapp, "Philosophy in the Imperial Period," 55.
51. Seneca, *Epistulae Morales* 11.8–10.
52. Seneca, *Epistulae Morales* 6.5–6.
53. Cf. Seneca, *Epistulae Morales* 94.50, where he defends the use of precepts: 'Weaker characters, however, need someone to precede them, to say: "Avoid this," or "Do that."'
54. Cf. the degree by the Athenians on Zeno of Citium, in which they decide to build him a tomb at public expense, praising him for 'affording to all in his own conduct a pattern for imitation in perfect consistency with his teaching' (Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae Philosophorum*, 7.10).
55. Epictetus, *Diatribae* 2.19.29.
56. Epictetus, *Diatribae* 2.19.30–34.
57. (Pseudo-)Plato, *Epistulae* 358c (letter X).
58. Cf. for a very sceptical judgment Irwin, "Plato: The Intellectual Background," 78 and Bury, *Timaeus, Critias, Cleitophon, Menexenus, Epistles*, 597. James Starr, who offers an interesting comparison of Paul and Plato as regards letter openings, argues for the letter's authenticity and imputes the focus on ethics to the occasional character of the letter. See Starr, "Letter Openings in Paul and Plato," 540.
59. In the mid-second century AD, Albinus states that some persons begin their reading of Plato with the *Epistles*, which enhances the probability of its familiarity and availability in that period. See Albinus, *Prologos* 6, translation in Burges, *The Works of Plato Vol. VI*, 318.
60. Bury, *Timaeus, Critias, Cleitophon, Menexenus, Epistles*, 597: 'What is he re said of the nature of "true philosophy" has fairly close parallel in the Dialogues (e.d. cf. Rep. 409D, 499A ff.; Theaet. 176C); but the blunt way in which "philosophy" is identified with purely moral qualities, with no reference to intellectual endowments, is foreign to Plato's manner. There need be no hesitation, therefore, in rejecting this letter also as a spurious composition.'
61. Epicurus, *Epistula ad Pythoclem*, apud Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae Philosophorum* 10.85. Epicurus' authorship of this letter is contested.
62. Cicero, *Tusculanae Disputationes* 4.80. Cicero envisioned himself a Platonist, even as he was drawn towards different 'branches', including the Stoics; this openmindedness was characteristic of the New Academy. Cf. Sedley, "Philosophical Allegiance," 118–119, esp. note 48.
63. Cicero, *Tusculanae Disputationes* 4.84: *Et si fidentia, id est firma animi confisio, scientia quaedam est et opinio gravis non temere adsentientis (...)*.
64. Musonius Rufus, *Fragment* 8, p. 35, r. 8–15 in Hense's edition.
65. Epictetus, *Diatribae* 2.9.10–14. Cf. Epictetus, *Diatribae* 2.2.3–7.
66. Cf. Dihle, "Die Griechische Philosophie," 17: 'So ist es kein wunder, dass die Umwelt Philosophen oft mehr nach ihrer Lebensführung als nach ihrer Lehre beurteilte.'
67. Epictetus, *Diatribae* 2.19.23.
68. Epictetus, *Diatribae* 3.23.17–18.
69. Cicero, *De Finibus* 2.30.96. Cf. Seneca, *Epistulae* 66.48.
70. Cf. Epictetus, *Diatribae* 2.22.25–27; Ibid., 4.13.15.
71. Porphyrius, *Ad Marcellam* 8.
72. The classical loci are *Theaetetus* 176b–c; *Politeia* 611d–e and *Timaeus* 41d–47c.
73. Litwa, *We are being transformed*, 197.
74. See i.a. Sedley, "The ideal of godlikeness," 309–328; Annas, *Platonic Ethics*, Chapter 3, 52–71; Erler, "Epicurus as Deus Mortalis," 159–181; Armstrong, "Plato on Becoming Like God," 171–183; Russell, "Virtue as 'Likeness to God'," 241–260; Mahoney, "Moral

- Virtue,” 77–91; Dombrowski, *A Platonic Philosophy of Religion*, Chapter 6, 95–112; Van Kooten, *Paul’s Anthropology*, 124–181; Miller, *Becoming God*; Constantinos and Athanassiadi, “La Philosophisation Du Religieux,” 63–65.
75. Stobaeus, *Anthologium* 2.7.106 = SVF 3.661.
 76. Epictetus, *Diatribae* 1.20.15.
 77. Epicurus, *Letter to Menoecus*, *apud* Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae Philosophorum* 10.124.
 78. For the presentation of *homoiōsis* as *telos*-formula by Eudorus, see Dillon, *The Middle Platonists*, 114–135; Van Kooten, “The ‘image of God’ and ‘being made like God’,” 141–148.
 79. A view that is shared by later Platonists like Plutarch, and might have been instigated by the possible Pythagorean dictum ‘Follow God (ἔπου Θεῷ)’ (see Stobaeus, *Anthologium* 2.249.8).
 80. Stobaeus, *Anthologium* 2.7.3f.
 81. Plato, *Laws* 716c.
 82. Annas, *Platonic Ethics*, 52–53.
 83. Brouwer, *The Stoic Sage*, 91, note 133.
 84. Cf. Dombrowski, *A Platonic Philosophy of Religion*, 97: ‘Platonic *askesis*, however, does not have to be seen in these terms in that the evidence of the dialogues of a certain hostility toward the senses does not necessarily indicate a desire to escape from the world but to transform it, or at least to transform our attitude toward it.’
 85. Plato, *Politeia* 6.500c: “Or do you think there is any way in which one would not imitate something one enjoys being associated with (ὅτῳ τις ὁμιλεῖ ἀγάμενος, μὴ μμεῖσθαι ἐκείνο)?” “No, that’s impossible,” he said. “The philosopher who allies himself with the divine and orderly becomes divine and orderly, as far as is possible for a human being (Θεῖῳ δὴ καὶ κοσμίῳ ὃ γε φιλόσοφος ὁμιλῶν κόσμιός τε καὶ θεῖος εἰς τὸ δυνατόν ἀνθρώπῳ γίγνεται).”
 86. See 2 *Corinthians* 10.12, a passage which could very well be aimed at opponents with similar sophistic views. On *Laws* 716c as anti-sophistic, cf. Van Kooten, “The ‘image of God’ and ‘being made like God’,” 134–135. On *homoiōsis theōi* in the virtues of justice and piety as a means of combating sophists in the *Theaetetus*, cf. Sedley, “The ideal of Godlikeness,” 313.
 87. Cf. *Politeia* 6.500d: “If then,” I said, “some compulsion comes upon him to put into practice what he sees in the divine realm in the private and public lives of men (ῥῆθι καὶ ἰδίᾳ καὶ δημοσίᾳ), and to mold not just his own character, do you think he would become a bad creator of temperance, justice, and every other common virtue (σωφροσύνης τε καὶ δικαιοσύνης καὶ συμπάσης τῆς δημοτικῆς ἀρετῆς)?” “Certainly not,” he said.’ Cf. also Armstrong’s thesis that ‘Plato’s identification of god with *voûs* or intelligence in the *Timaeus*, *Philebus*, and *Laws* influences his conception of assimilation to god. Rather than fleeing from the sensible world, becoming like this god commits one to improving it.’ See Armstrong, “Plato on Becoming Like God,” 171. See on otherworldliness in the *Theaetetus* Mahoney, “Assimilation to God in the *Theaetetus*,” 321–338.
 88. On the occurrence of sagehood according to the Stoics, cf. René Brouwer’s conclusion that ‘the Stoics, Zeno included, were not self-declared sages.’ See Brouwer, *The Stoic Sage*, 135.
 89. Epictetus, *Diatribae* 2.19.26–28.
 90. Maximus of Tyre, *Orations* 2.3. Translation by M.B. Trapp (1997).
 91. Maximus of Tyre, *Orations* 13.2.
 92. Alcinous, *Epitome doctrinae Platonicae* 2.2, 153.3–9. Translation by Dillon (1993).
 93. *Ibid.*, 28.2, 181.44–46.
 94. Philo, *De Opificio Mundi* 69 and *Quaestiones in Genesim* 2.62 respectively. For a discussion, see Van Kooten, *Paul’s Anthropology*, 181–199.
 95. Philo, *Quis rerum divinarum heres sit*, 205.
 96. *Ibid.*, 206.

97. Note the ambiguity inherent to the word *cultor*, meaning both worshipper and cultivator, that is lost in translation.
98. Seneca, *Epistulae Morales* 73.16.
99. Ibid., 41.1–2. Pace Fitzgerald, “Passions and Moral Progress,” 275: ‘The contrast with Paul’s moral vision of humanity redeemed to love, worship and glorify God (...) could not be stronger. (...) In Seneca’s ethics, the moral power of the philosophic life, far from revealing the need for God or leading to worship of God, rather demonstrates one’s own equality with God’.
100. Seneca, *Epistulae Morales* 95.50.
101. Erler, “Epicurus as deus mortalis,” 178.
102. Ibid., 179, followed by Heath, *Paul’s Visual Piety*, p. 83.
103. Ibid., 179. The anonymous commentary was conventionally dated to the second century AD, though some argue for an earlier date (first century BC–early first AD).
104. See note 85 above.
105. Cf. *Politeia* 6.500d, quoted in note 86 above.
106. Plutarch, *Ad principem ineruditem* 780e–f and 780b respectively. In this passage, the language of assimilation to God and being an image of God coincide, cf. on this Van Kooten,, “The ‘image of God’ and ‘being made like God’,” 215.
107. Plato, *Phaedrus* 253b–c.
108. Erler, “Epicurus as deus mortalis,” 177.
109. Some of these instances (the two upcoming passages from Epictetus and Silius Italicus) are also discussed in Teresa Morgan’s comprehensive collection of *pistis* and *fides* language *Roman faith and Christian faith*, under the heading of ‘Divine Pistis/fides Towards Human Beings’ (128–142). Morgan, however, does not mention the *topos* of *homoïōsis theōi* as such and is generally sceptical about New Testament authors participating in what she calls ‘high’ philosophical discourses: ‘there are few if any passages where ‘high’ philosophical ideas can plausibly be seen as forming even part of the background to New Testament *pistis* language’ (151).
110. Plato, *Politeia* 500d.
111. Plato, *Politeia* 500d–e.
112. Fides is said to have had her first temple erected either when the Trojans first arrived at Rome’s future site, or under the rule of Numa. See Freyburger, *Fides*, 259–260.
113. Silius Italicus, *Punica* 2.484–486.
114. Silius Italicus, *Punica* 2.515–517.
115. Epictetus, *Diatribae* 2.14.11–13.
116. Ibid., 2.8.28.
117. If we follow the analysis of David Hay, they together make up 93 cases, i.e. 59.6 per cent, of all Philo’s uses of *pistis*. See Hay, “Pistis as ‘Ground for Faith’,” 465, see 464 note 14 and 15 for all specific passages.
118. The *pistis* of Abraham is described by Philo as a ‘perfect good’ (*De migratione Abrahami* 44), ‘the most perfect of the virtues’ (*Quis rerum divinarum heres sit* 91) and ‘the queen of the virtues’ (*De Abrahamo* 270).
119. Philo, *Quis rerum divinarum heres sit* 93. Cf. Philo, *De virtutibus* 218: [Abraham] put his trust (πιστεύσαντα) in nothing created rather than in the Uncreated and Father of all’.
120. Philo, *De confusione linguarum* 31.
121. Cf. Daniélou, *Philo of Alexandria*, 152: ‘Indeed, for Philo, faith is essentially the act by which the soul adheres to God’s immutable realm, turning away from the unstable world of sensible life. (...) its precise meaning is the mind’s adhesion to intelligible realities that are stable and establish the mind in the realm of immutability.’
122. On the importance of the transcendence of God in Philo and in the Platonism of his days, cf. Bonazzi, “Towards Transcendence,” 233–252. On the increasing scepticism this involved, cf. Runia, “The Beginnings of the End,” 302–303.
123. Philo, *De mutatione nominum* 181–183.

124. See, for instance, Plutarch, *Adversus Colotem* 1115e: 'The relation of the partaken in to the partaker is that of cause to matter, model to copy, power to effect (ὄν αἰτία τε πρὸς ὕλην ἔχει καὶ παράδειγμα πρὸς εἰκόνα καὶ δύναμις πρὸς πάθος)' and my discussion of this passage in Sierksma-Agteres, "'Say goodbye to opinions!'" 68–69.
125. For some important references, see note 22 above.
126. *Hebrews* 13.7. Leaders are to be minded for the outcome of their conduct and perhaps, since *ekbasis* can also refer to death, even for their literal departure from life. Translations of biblical texts have been taken over from the NRSV, with minor revisions when necessary.
127. The full phrase reads εἰς τὴν ὑμῶν προκοπὴν καὶ χαρὰν τῆς πίστεως. I here take the genitive *pisteōs* to refer to both progress and joy, alternatively it may refer only to joy.
128. Paul refers to the gnomic maxim that household stewards need to be found trustworthy: 4.2. On Paul's use of maxims see Ramsaran, *Liberating Words*, on this specific maxim: 35.
129. *1 Corinthians* 4.15–17.
130. *1 Thessalonians* 1.6–8.
131. For horizontal imitation of 'normal' Christ-followers, cf. *Philippians* 3.17: 'Brothers and sisters, join in imitating me (συμμιμηταὶ μου γίνεσθε), and observe those who live according to the example you have in us (καθὼς ἔχετε τύπον ἡμᾶς).'
132. To avoid any confusion, by 'content' I mean that which is to be imitated, namely the faithful life, not cognitive beliefs as in the Thomistic *fides quae*.
133. *Romans* 6.8.
134. *1 Thessalonians* 4.14.
135. *Romans* 10.9–10a: 'if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead (καὶ πιστεύσης ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ σου ὅτι ὁ θεὸς αὐτὸν ἤγειρεν ἐκ νεκρῶν), you will be saved. For one believes with the heart and so is justified (καρδίᾳ γὰρ πιστεύεται εἰς δικαιοσύνην) (...)' For an ethical interpretation of justice as in line with Paul's Judaism, see Vanlandingham, *Judgment and Justification*.
136. *2 Corinthians* 5.21.
137. *Galatians* 4.19: 'My little children, for whom I am again in the pain of childbirth until Christ is formed in you (τέκνα μου, οὓς πάλιν ὠδίνω μέχρις οὗ μορφωθῇ Χριστὸς ἐν ὑμῖν) (...)'
138. *1 Corinthians* 15.2: 'through which also you are being saved, if you hold firmly to the message that I proclaimed to you—unless you have come to believe in vain'; *1 Corinthians* 15.14: 'and if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation has been in vain and your faith has been in vain (κενὴ καὶ ἡ πίστις ὑμῶν)'; *1 Corinthians* 15.17: 'If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile (ματαία ἡ πίστις ὑμῶν) and you are still in your sins.'
139. See e.g. Miller, *The Third Kind*, 61.
140. Most famously by Albert Schweitzer: Schweitzer, *Mysticism*, 122–123.
141. *Galatians* 2.20 (discussed below); *2 Corinthians* 13.5.
142. *2 Corinthians* 13.5.
143. Cf. *Wisdom* 7.27: 'And being but one, she can do all things: And remaining in herself, she maketh all things new: And in all ages entering into holy souls (εἰς ψυχὰς ὁσίας μεταβαίνουσα), she maketh them friends of God, and prophets.' (Translation L.C.L. Brenton.)
144. *2 Timothy* 2.11–13.
145. Cf. Paul's questions in the *Letter to the Romans*, 'What if some were unfaithful (εἰ ἡπίστησάν τινες)? Will their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God (μὴ ἡ ἀπιστία αὐτῶν τὴν πίστιν τοῦ θεοῦ καταργήσῃ)?' (*Romans* 3.3). These questions, however, seem to come up from a covenantal, rather than mimetic setting, since it is Israel here, who is portrayed as having betrayed God's trust, manifested in entrusting the divine oracles.

146. Schenck, "2 Corinthians," 525: 'Although I resist the "neglected evidence" title, my ultimate interest in the current study is what 2 Cor 4:13 might contribute to this discussion.'
147. 2 Corinthians 4.13–14a.
148. Schenck, "2 Corinthians," 527–529. He substantiates this argument i.a. by referring to the early Christian practice of reading the psalms 'as if Christ were uttering them' (529, referring to Hays, "Christ Prays the Psalms," 122–136). Unfortunately, Schenck does not seem aware that the same case, namely 'that Paul has this entire story in mind as he cites LXX Pss 114–115 in 2 Cor 4:13 (...) precisely because it serves as an apt expression of the story of Jesus', had already been made, though not so much in context of the *pistis Christou* discussion, by Thomas Stegman in *The Character of Jesus*, 146–168, cited from pages 156–157.
149. Cited from Schenck, "2 Corinthians," 526. The motive of imitation if Christ's character in Paul, particularly in 2 Corinthians, is amply treated, however, by Stegman, *The Character of Jesus*, even though he also leaves out contemporary sources on moral imitation.
150. 1 Corinthians 1.9; Ibid., 10.13; 2 Corinthians 1.18; 1 Thessalonians 5.24.
151. 2 Corinthians 1.18–21a.
152. 1 Corinthians 2.16: 'For who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?' Cf. LXX, Isa 40.13: τίς ἔγνω νοῦν Κυρίου, καὶ τίς αὐτοῦ σύμβουλος ἐγένετο, ὃς συμβιβᾷ αὐτόν).
153. Van Kooten, *Paul's Anthropology*, 213. Cf. his entire Section 2.2, "The 'image of God' and 'being made like God': The traditions of *homoiosis theoi* in Greek philosophy from Plato to Plotinus," 124–181.
154. See *Philippians* 2.7, 'but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave (μορφὴν δούλου), being born in human likeness (ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος)' and *Romans* 8.3 'by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh (ὁ θεὸς τὸν ἑαυτοῦ υἱὸν πέμψας ἐν ὁμοιώματι σαρκὸς ἁμαρτίας)'. Cf. Van Kooten, *Paul's Anthropology*, 216: 'By emphasizing the descent of the heavenly man, his incarnation, and assimilation to man, Paul seems to enhance man's ability to become of the same form as him.' cf. Eastman, "Imitating Christ Imitating Us," 434–448 on Christ first mimicking Adam/humanity in *Philippians*.
155. Cf. Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ*, 249: 'as we respond in faith, we participate in an ongoing reenactment of Christ's faithfulness.'
156. *Galatians* 2.20.
157. *Galatians* 3.24.
158. Silius Italicus, *Punica* 495.
159. *Ephesians* 4.24.
160. Plato, *Theaetetus* 176b: 'to become like God is to become righteous and holy with wisdom (ὁμοίωσις δὲ δίκαιον καὶ ὅσιον μετὰ φρονήσεως γενέσθαι)'. This connection to Platonic *homoiosis* language is missed by Volker Rabens, who only refers to the LXX. See Rabens, "Pneuma and the Beholding of God," 323.
161. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* 2.22.136.

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